

A
COMMENTARY
UPON
THE HOLY BIBLE,
FROM
HENRY AND SCOTT;
WITH NUMEROUS OBSERVATIONS AND NOTES FROM OTHER WRITERS.
ROMANS TO REVELATION.

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PREFACE TO THE EPISTLES.

* THE apostles having received their commission to preach the way of salvation to all nations, and being inspired and gifted with miraculous powers for that purpose, went forth and published the things which concern the Lord Jesus, first in Judea, afterwards among the gentiles; and to them the world is indebted for the complete knowledge of the gospel scheme. Yet that praise is due to them only in a subordinate degree; for Christ is the Light of the world, and the Holy Spirit, who inspired the apostles, shone on them with a light derived from Him. So Christ himself declared, John 16. 13—15; "When the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and show it unto you."—That the revelation of the gospel doctrines made to the apostles by the Holy Spirit, and which they delivered to the world, might not be left to the uncertainty of tradition, but be preserved uncorrupted to the end of time, the Holy Ghost moved certain of these divinely inspired teachers to commit the doctrines to writing, in epistles, some to particular churches, others to particular persons, and others to believers in general; all which are still in our possession.—*Macknight*.

The second principal division of the New Testament is these epistles or letters. All the material facts recorded in the gospels and Acts of the apostles are confirmed in these writings. The particulars of the life and death of our Saviour are often referred to in them, as confirmed by eye-witnesses, and as being the foundation of the christian religion. And the rapid propagation of that faith, as recorded in the Acts, is confirmed by numerous passages in the epistles, written to the churches already planted, while the miraculous gifts with which the apostles were endued, are often appealed to, as undeniable evidence of their Divine mission. *Paley* has shown that the Acts of the apostles and the epistles mutually explain and elucidate each other, even in many minute particulars, but evidently without the least design or aim at coincidence, so that the more carefully they are examined, and compared, the more evident will it appear that both are indisputably genuine. *T. H. Horne* states, that the epistles are to be considered as commentaries on the doctrines of the gospels, sent to particular churches, to explain and apply those doctrines, to confute errors, excite christians to holiness, and to encourage under trials and persecutions. Since these epistles were written, as is abundantly manifest, under Divine inspiration, they are of equal authority with the gospels and other books of scripture, and are equally to be received, as conveying to the church in all ages, the will, the mind, the truth and the commandments of God, while the peculiar doctrines of the gospel are here more explicitly stated and explained, and their practical tendency more argumentatively shown than in the historical books.

The importance of the epistles must be recognised, when it is considered that they state and explain doctrines of which our Saviour had not fully treated in his discourses. They also contain instructions concerning many necessary duties, and are especially important to the christian church, as clearly proving that the gentiles make one church with the jews. And while many passages in the epistles show the fulfilment of ancient prophecies, others contain prophecies not less remarkable, some of which have been accomplished, while others remain yet unfulfilled. This also constitutes an irrefragable proof that they were written by the inspiration of God. Various satisfactory reasons may be assigned, why many truths should be more obscurely delivered during our Lord's ministry than afterwards; this he himself repeatedly intimated, and surely we cannot look for the full and explicit declarations of the whole counsel of God, better than in the writings of those whom our Lord Jesus selected to be the depositaries of his truths, to whom he promised the Holy Spirit to lead them into all truth, and whom he sent into all the world to make known his gospel, even as his Father had sent him. If the doctrine of the apostles be the unadulterated and the entire truth of God, and altogether of divine authority, as they preached it, assuredly it must be so when they committed it to writing. And it is from this source alone that we directly and expressly know what were the doctrines taught by the apostles. Hence it follows, that whatever the apostles have delivered in these epistles, as necessary to be believed or done by christians, that must be as

necessary to be believed and practised in order to salvation, as what was personally taught by Christ himself, and is contained in the gospels. Nor may we forget that the writers of these epistles speak of themselves, and of each other, as authoritatively delivering the truth and will of God to mankind. The very few exceptions, which are expressed, limited to particular cases, show that the apostles, in all other instances, were conscious that they wrote as moved by the Holy Ghost.

It is not necessary here to enter into details to prove the genuineness and authenticity of the epistles. These have been abundantly and fully shown in works written expressly on the subject. It is sufficient now to say, that the epistles in general are written in manner, and contain expressions, which show that they must have been known to be genuine by those to whom they were addressed, during the lives of the writers; and it is a matter of historical record that they were known to the christian churches in general, at a very early period, as the writings of the apostles whose names they bear. The churches, with one consent, acknowledged them as the word of God; and the usual practice of those who erred in life or doctrine was, not to deny that these writings were genuine and inspired, but to seek to wrest the meaning to their particular views.

Shuttleworth remarks, that the perusal of the epistles must force upon the mind of every impartial person, an impression of the perfect sincerity and earnestness of the five several writers, and of the actual identity of the doctrines, which, under a somewhat dissimilar exterior, they will, upon a very slight examination, be found respectively to inculcate. Such is the harmony which pervades these writings, that it would not be possible to produce from them one single line or sentiment, which might not, with perfect consistency, be transferred from the page of its actual author, to that of any one of the four others, where the same subject shall have been discussed. The combination of a diversity of character or manner, with real unity of purpose, renders this important portion of the sacred writings, at once an irrefragable evidence of the truth of revelation and also highly and practically useful as a rule of christian holiness. And it is no less remarkable, that the same internal uniformity prevails with regard to the epistles of St. Paul, thirteen in number, in which, as *Paley* shows, there is indisputable evidence that they were separate publications. They form no continued story; they compose no regular correspondence; they comprise not the transactions of any particular period; they carry on no connexion of argument; they depend not upon one another, and except in one or two instances, they refer not to one another, and it is evident there has been no care employed to produce or preserve the appearance of consistency amongst them. They evidently at first appeared separately, and have been collected since.

In reference to the style of instruction employed by the apostles, *Bridges* says, They felt themselves "debtors to the unwise," as well as "to the wise." They would neither sink beneath the dignity of their subject, nor soar above the capacities of the people. They used great plainness of speech. Their mode of teaching, though with considerable difference of style, was brought down within the reach of the lowest intelligence. Paul dealt much in illustration, never remote, and always on subjects with which he knew the people to be conversant. James, in the same style of writing, crowded together familiar illustrations in the exhibition of a single point. Peter and John are plain and didactic. Jude, as far as we can judge from one short epistle, is energetic and expressive. All of them, however, in their expressions and turns of sentiment, are distinguished by a remarkable perspicuity, never above the ordinary level.

Bridges urges the study of the epistles upon ministers especially, as of the first importance, and it is not less so to christians in general. "It will show whether every 'jot and tittle' of scriptural truths, delivered to the primitive churches, of course omitting casuistical questions, is included in the course of ministerial instruction. It will teach what to bring forth, and in what mode—to form alike the doctrine, the statement, and the terms, upon the Divine model. It will mark the unscriptural scheme of giving abstract views of the doctrine of grace, instead of combining them with those practical enforcements of holiness, in which the sacred writers uniformly enforce them. It will mark also the error of avoiding the use of the terms in which holy inspiration has clothed these deep and mysterious doctrines, and in which they are found in the authorized version of the scriptures, probably from the apprehension of exciting disgust, misconception, or licentiousness; but which, however well intentioned, is unevangelical in its spirit, and gradually substitutes a lower style or standard of preaching, in the room of the spiritual character and unadulterated purity of the gospel. It has been justly observed, that a fixed deference to any other examples lead insensibly to partial representations of the gospel, if not to absolute error. The confidence of the people can only be assured, when they mark all the doctrines and statements of their own scripture embodied in their public ministrations."

In reference to the manner in which the epistles are penned, it may be further stated in the Preface to *Henry*, that "The writers of these epistles have declared what they owe was from God: now they must know whether they had the especial assistance of the Holy Spirit or not in their writing as well as preaching; and they in all things appear to have been men of such probity, that they would not dare to say they had the Spirit of God, when they had it not, or if they so much as doubted whether they had it or not. See 1 Cor. 10, 12. As to the style of these epistles, though it be necessary we should believe the divine influence superintending the several writers of them, yet it is not easy to explain the manner, or to determine whether and in what particulars the words they wrote were dictated to them by the Holy Spirit, or how far their own natural or acquired endowments were employed under the inspection and guidance of the Spirit. We must believe these holy men spake and wrote as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, that he put them on this work, and directed them in it. It is very probable, that sometimes God the Holy Spirit not only suggested the very thoughts in their minds, but put words into their mouths; and He always infallibly guided them into all truth, both when they expounded the scriptures of the Old Testament, and when they gave rules for our faith and practice in the gospel church state. And yet, perhaps, it may be allowed, without any diminution to the authority of these epistles, that the penmen made some use of their own reasoning powers and different endowments, as well as of their different sorts of writing; and that by this we are to account for that difference of style, observable between the writings of Paul, and those of Peter and John. The like difference may be discerned between the style of the prophets. However, the best way to understand these scriptures aright, is not to criticise nicely upon the words and phrases, but to attend carefully the drift and design of these inspired writers in them. And the subject-matter of these epistles is entirely conformable to the rest of the scriptures: while in them we find frequent reference to passages of the Old Testament, and explanations of them. Indeed the New Testament refers to, and in a manner builds upon the Old. Also the general method of these epistles is such as best serves their end and design, which is the end of the whole scripture—practical godliness, out of a principle of Divine love, a good conscience, and faith unfeigned; accordingly, most of the epistles begin with the great truths of the gospel, the articles of the christian faith, which, when received, work love, purity the conscience, and produce evangelical obedience: and, after these principles have been laid down, practical conclusions are drawn and urged from them." In a pious, affectionate and faithful manner, in which the epistles admonish, reprove, hort, and offer consolation, can only be appreciated by patient and diligent examination. The pervading characteristic of these beautiful, eloquent, and profound compositions, is the deep and earnest anxiety manifested by the writers, for the spiritual welfare of the churches committed to their care, and the complete self-devotion with which they rendered every faculty, every interest, both of soul and body, for the accomplishment of that important object.

In all essential points the epistles are fully explicit. "The life-directing precepts" they contain are easy to be understood; and though some parts may be considered more difficult than the gospels, yet they will not be found so in essential matters. Critical difficulties arise from many meetings in language, and circumstances of time and place, and from the events of those times not being known to us as they were to those whom the apostles addressed, and their contemporaries; but no points of a doctrinal nature are involved thereby. And as to doctrinal difficulties, it will be found that they arise not from the expressions of the word of God, but from ourselves. Many points are clearly and expressly stated in the epistles, which human reason is unwilling to admit, and therefore attempts to explain, or rather to explain away, instead of receiving them with simple reliance on the Divine authority, from whence these statements have emanated. And it may well be expected that the scriptures should contain some statements beyond the grasp of finite understandings. With reference to these, we have our Lord's own declaration, "What thou knowest not now, thou shalt know hereafter;" but vain man would be wise, and cannot be satisfied to allow anything to rest, unless he can devise at he considers a satisfactory explanation. Thus many "rather draw the scriptures to their system of doctrine, than bring their doctrines to the standard of scripture." A side of interpretation altogether unjust, and utterly useless in the attainment of truth. The words of *Jewell* on this subject well deserve our attention: "Some things in the scriptures are hard; I deny it not. It is very expedient that somewhat should be revered, to make us more diligent in reading, more desirous to understand, more fervent prayer, more willing to ask the judgment of others, to presume the less on our own judgment. The ways of the Lord are straight, and his words plain, even to the simple. And hath let men be deceived in their human learning. They take themselves to be

wise, yet are become fools. Contrary to worldly judgment, God hath made those who were weak and simple, and of no reputation, wise and righteous, and sanctified, and redeemed in Christ Jesus. God's word is holy—we may not use it to vaunt ourselves, or to make show of our own wisdom. The word of God teaches lowliness of mind; it teaches us to know ourselves. If we learn not humility, we learn nothing. Although we seem to know somewhat, yet we know not in such sort as we ought to know. The scriptures are the mysteries of God. Let us not be curious; let us not seek to know more than God has revealed by them."—This counsel is indeed most important in respect to every part of scripture, but most especially with regard to the epistles. Assuredly no one who reads them with simplicity, and in a prayerful spirit, contented to leave what appears beyond his depth, will ever be disappointed in any endeavours to obtain benefit to his soul from these writings. And he will find many passages which at first appeared dark, by degrees begin to open, and he may be confident he shall not be left in ignorance with respect to any passage, or doctrine which it is needful for him to understand.

T. H. Horne has collected many valuable observations with regard to the doctrinal interpretation of scripture, which are especially applicable to the epistles. He observes, with respect to the literal construction, that difficulties not only sometimes arise, or are increased by the parenthetical style and rapid transitions of the apostle, but that also the modern divisions of chapters and verses frequently separate parts which are closely connected in the same chain of reasoning. The advice of *Locke* on this point is very valuable. He says, "I saw plainly, after I began once to reflect on it, that if any one should now write me a letter as long as St. Paul's to the Romans, concerning such a matter as that is, in a style as foreign, and containing expressions as dubious as his seem to be; if I should divide it into fifteen or sixteen chapters, and read one of them to-day and another to-morrow, &c., it was ten to one that I should ever come to a full and clear comprehension of it. The way to understand the mind of him that wrote it, every one would agree, was to read the whole letter through, from one end to the other, all at once, to see what was the main subject and tendency of it; or if it has several parts and purposes in it, not dependent one of another, nor in a subordination to one chief aim and end, to discover what those different matters were, and where the author concluded one and began another; and if there were any necessity of dividing the epistles into parts, mark the boundaries of them." In the prosecution of this thought, *Locke* concluded it necessary for the full understanding of any one of St. Paul's epistles to read it all through at one sitting, and to observe, as well as he could, the drift and design of the writer. Successive perusals in a similar way, he says, at length gave him a good general view of the apostle's main purpose in writing the epistle, the chief branches of his discourse, the arguments he used, and the disposition of the whole. This, however, he adds, is not to be attained by one or two hasty readings. It must be repeated again and again, *with a close attention to the tenour of the discourse, and a neglect of the divisions into chapters and verses*. The safest way is to suppose that the epistle has but one business, and but one aim: until, by frequent perusal, you are led to see that there are distinct independent matters in it, which show themselves.

Macknight remarks, in reference to the concise manner in which the epistles are written, that they were thereby given to the world in a form not bulky or voluminous, but such, that they might be transcribed and purchased at a comparatively small expense, and be of more general use. The advantage of this to the disciples in early ages is easily conceived, when it is recollected that then there were no books but such as were written with the pen. Even the apparent want of connexion in many parts renders them more easy to commit to memory, and thus highly profitable in every age of the church, especially when copies could only be obtained by a very few persons. Accordingly we find, that in former times, as at the reformation, large portions of the epistles were committed to memory by those who could not read them. Even at this day, the common-people reap the same advantage from the concise and seemingly unconnected form in which the sacred oracles are written. Whether they read them or hear them read, the nervous sentences and striking passages with which these divinely inspired writings abound, engrave themselves so deeply in the people's minds, that they often occur to their thoughts, both as matter of consolation under the troubles of life, and as motives and rules of conduct in the various situations in which they are placed.

We have now to consider the public use made of those epistles, at the time when they were written. In whatever part of the world the jews resided, they assembled every sabbath for worshipping God and reading the sacred writings, and the same was practised in the christian churches. But after the Spirit of God had inspired the evangelists to write their histories of Christ's ministry, and the apostles to commit their doctrines and precepts to writing, it was fit that these should be statedly read in the public assem-

es, to teach the brethren more perfectly the things wherein they had been instructed. It would seem that to introduce this practice, St. Paul, in the conclusion of his first epistle to the Thessalonians, which is generally supposed to have been the first of his inspired writings, required them to put his writings on a level with the writings of the Jewish prophets, by reading them in their public assemblies for worship, and by regarding them as the infallible rule of their faith and practice. For the same purpose, John, 1. 3, declares him blessed who *readeth*, and those who *hear* the words of his prophecy. The apostles, by the inscription of their letters, having signified their desire they should be read publicly, not only in the churches to which they were first sent, but in all the neighbouring churches; and St. Paul, in particular, having given express orders to that purpose, in his epistles to the Thessalonians and Colossians, we have a good reason to believe that their epistles were read publicly and frequently in churches to which they were inscribed, along with the scriptures of the Old Testament; and copies were sent to every church interested in them. Such of the brethren also, could afford the expense, and were capable of reading those divinely inspired writings, might get the epistles and gospels transcribed for their own use; so that copies would be multiplied and dispersed in a very short time. This accounts for St. Paul's epistles, in particular, being so generally known, read, and acknowledged by all christians, in the very age, as we learn from 2 Peter 3. 16. That apostle even implies that they were then universally read and acknowledged as inspired writings; for he says that the ignorant and unstable wrested them, as they did the other scriptures also, to their own destruction.—*From Macknight.*

The following extract from *Howe* is especially applicable to the epistles.

but consider, again, the comprehensiveness of this Sacred Volume—of how vast extent it is. What mind but the mind of God could have comprehended and collected together so great a variety of things as we find in this book? so as that nothing can be pretended to be wanting; one thing can be so much as alleged as wanting that is requisite to be put into such a book, serve the end it assumes to serve, and what it avows itself to be designed for. Things that all states of men from the highest to the lowest, all ages and each sex. Things we have made up the system of what we are to believe, and things that compose and make up the sum of what we are to do, and that make up the system for us of what we are to desire. Do look to the matters to be believed and those to be done, and those for which we are directed to and authorized to hope, and who can pretend anything to be wanting here? The comprehensiveness of this book speaks the Divinity of it, having that in it which suits every case and every purpose for which such a book can be desirable. Consider, also, its correspondence to spirit of man, which it was designed to set right, and be a measure unto, if you look upon spirit of man under a threefold capacity. That is, look upon it as merely rational, or look upon it as corrupt and depraved, or look upon it as regenerate and renewed; and the contents of the book most admirably suit it every way. Look upon it as merely rational, and nothing is so agreeable to the mind and reason of a man; so as that, though there are things in it that the son of man could not have found out, yet there is nothing in it which the reason of man did not approve, being represented and laid before it. And if we consider the condition of man as corrupt, what delineations have we of the corrupt frame and temper of the spirit of man in his state?—When God looks down from heaven upon man, to understand who it is that seeks for God there is none that is found doing good, no not one; none seeking after God; for that must be chiefly meant: as if all the world did agree in that one common sense, to say unto him, "Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways: let not God molest or disturb in our course." Just so is the degenerate spirit and temper of man represented, and how true representation is it! And then look upon the spirit of man as renewed, and how lively a depiction is there of the regenerate man, the renewed man! Just so desiring after God, the living God, there placing its sole felicity and highest delight, there reposing its treasure, there placing its study of the heart, to be sincere and upright in his sight: who but God could have made such a representation of man? Observe also the wonderful efficacy this word hath had upon the souls of men, from age to age. It hath shown itself to be the "power of God, through faith, for salvation." This sword of the Spirit, and arrows taken from hence, how "sharp have they been in the hearts of the King's enemies," by which multitudes have been made subject to conquests hath it made!—But this seal, set upon the souls of men by the sanctifying Spirit, and proof the word has been continually the instrument, carries to seeing or discerning persons the greatest evidence imaginable. "You are," saith the apostle, "the epistle of Christ manifested by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in the fleshy tables of the heart." 2 Cor. 3. 3. What a demonstration of the divine Author that made work, even by his word, upon the hearts and souls of men! So as that the same apostle asks in that, 2 Cor. 13. 5. "Do you seek a proof of Christ speaking in me, which to you-ward I weak, but mighty in you?" "Examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith." "Do you seek a proof of Christ speaking by me?" See him in this book, and look into yourselves, and are wants no evidence to demonstrate to reason the Divine authority or Divinity of this book, any that impartially consider the matter. But it is a far more lively proof that any one has of his in himself, and in his own soul, when he is made to taste in the word how gracious the word is, when he has the pleasant relish of it in his own spirit, when once he comes to experience the law of God is his delight, and that therein he can exercise himself day and night. It manifestly serves this end—it manifestly aims at this—to make men holy and pure, and to fit them for heaven and a blessed eternity, and it has no other design, it aims at nothing else.

The epistles are not arranged in our Bibles according to the time in which they were written, but probably with some reference to the subjects or the parties addressed. Several of the notices of the places from which they are said to have been written are without authority, having been added by transcribers, and are not always correct. They also are stated differently in different manu-script copies of the originals. *Lardner* and others have endeavoured to ascertain these points more correctly from the internal as well as the external evidence, and arrive at the following results :

<i>Epistles of Paul.</i>	<i>From whence written.</i>	<i>Time when written.</i>
1 Thessalonians	Corinth.	A.D. 52
2 Thessalonians	Corinth.	52
Galatians	Corinth.	Late in 52, or early in 53
1 Corinthians	Ephesus.	57
Romans.	Corinth.	End of 57, or early in 58
2 Corinthians	Macedonia	58
Ephesians	Rome.	61
Philippians	Rome.	Late in 62, or early in 63
Colossians	" Rome.	62
Philemon	Rome.	62 or 63
Hebrews	Italy, perhaps Rome	Late in 62, or early in 63
1 Timothy	Macedonia.	64
Titus	Macedonia.	64
2 Timothy	Rome.	65

The Catholic, or General Epistles.

James	Judea.	A.D. 61
1 Peter	Rome.	64
2 Peter	Rome.	Beginning of 65
1 John	Perhaps Ephesus.	68 or 69
2 and 3 John	Ephesus.	68 or 69
Jude	Unknown.	61 or 65

This latter division of the epistles has usually been denominated catholic. The reason does not clearly appear. Some suppose it is because they contain that one catholic or general doctrine which was delivered to the churches by the apostles. Others consider that they were addressed more generally to all the believers, and not so particularly to certain churches or persons. A third opinion is, that the first epistles of John and Peter having always been received as authentic, were from the first denominated catholic or universally acknowledged epistles, and that the same appellation was extended to the others as they likewise were acknowledged.

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THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS.

The epistle to the Romans is placed first in order, probably because Rome was the capital of the world, or because it is the longest and most comprehensive of all St. Paul's epistles. When he wrote it, there were several thousand jews living at Rome, among whom christianity appears to have made considerable progress, though we have not any clear account of its first introduction, and the number of converts had been enlarged by many proselytes from the gentiles.

The occasion of writing this epistle may be gathered from its contents. St. Paul being unable to visit the christians at Rome, as he had intended, wrote to them from Corinth by Phœbe, a deaconess of Cenchrea, a port of that city, ch. 16. 1. 2. He found that the Roman church was composed partly of heathens, who had embraced christianity, and partly of jews, who believed in Jesus, but retained many of their prejudices. A considerable number of the jews mingled the law and the gospel together in justification, and excluded the gentiles from the fellowship of Christ, despising them, and insisting on their own superior advantages. On the other hand, the converted gentiles, knowing that the jews were rejected of God, placed themselves above them, as being a people cast away; and boasted of their own wisdom and virtue, using their christian liberty in an offensive manner. To silence these controversies, and to settle both in the truth, the apostle demonstrates that the jews had no cause to boast of their righteousness and prerogatives, nor the gentiles of their wisdom. He states that both were by nature liable to eternal condemnation, and both were to be justified by faith alone, and cautions them not to abuse grace, exhorting them to walk in newness of life. The apostle therefore, 1. Removes the false grounds of justification, the works of the law, on which some rested. 2. He asserts the true grounds, both immediate and remote. Immediate, that is true faith, which he confirms by the example of Abraham, and explains by the excellent effects thereof, peace of conscience, assurance of faith, joy in God himself, as reconciled in Christ, newness of life, freedom from the curse of the law, and constancy against the remainders of corruptions and afflictions. Remote, namely God's predestination; and he declares now the jews, rejected for their unbelief, were left in ignorance till the fullness of the gentiles should be come in. 3. Having thus cleared and proved the truth of justification, he proceeds to practical exhortations; generally, to duties belonging both to God and man, specially towards superiors and inferiors, closing with certain rules of life, and various salutations.

Thus the scope or design of the apostle appears to have been, to confute the unbelieving, and to instruct the believing jews, to confirm the christian and to convert the idolatrous gentile; and to place the gentle convert upon an equality with the jewish, in respect of his religious condition, and his rank in the Divine favour. These several designs are reduced to one scheme, by opposing or arguing with the infidel or unbelieving jew, in favour of the christian or believing gentile. Stating the way of a sinner's acceptance with God, or justification in his sight, merely by grace, through faith in the righteousness of Christ, without distinction of nations, he vindicates it from the objections raised by judaizing christians, who were for making up terms of acceptance with God, by a mixture of law and gospel, and for excluding uncircumcised gentiles from any share in the blessings of salvation brought in by the Messiah.

To enter fully into the spirit of the epistle, we must consider the feelings of a jew in those times, and endeavour to realize in our own minds his utter aversion to the gentiles, his valuing and exalting himself upon his relation to God and to Abraham, upon the law, his worship, circumcision, &c. as if the jews were the only persons who had any right to God's favour. It is, indeed, to use the words of *Machaunt*, a writing which, for sublimity and truth of sentiment, for brevity and strength of expression, for regularity in its structure, but above all, for the unspeakable importance of the discoveries it contains, stands unrivalled by any human compositions. It has always been acknowledged as a genuine and authentic work of the apostle Paul.

From the peculiar importance of the epistle to the Romans, it requires a more detailed notice than the brief sketch of its scope and design already given. *Parr* states that it is the catechism of the christian religion, the key and abridgement of all divinity, an absolute and perfect writing, containing the articles of christian faith. *T. Scott* says, that it is the only part of scripture in which Divine truth is delivered in a systematical manner. The following argument or analysis of the epistle, chiefly from the Reformers, may assist the reader: it is important that he should be well acquainted with its general scope and object, as without a general knowledge of its contents, and of the various gradations by which the apostle was led to conduct his arguments, much of the energy and beauty with which they are enforced will be lost.

The first five chapters exhibit Christ as the author and efficient cause of justification.

I. The apostle, having begun with speaking of his apostolical office, proceeds to commend the gospel; this necessarily brings him to speak concerning faith, and he is then led to the doctrine of justification by faith, which forms the main subject of the epistle. But as men are either asleep in sin, utterly careless as to the concerns of their souls, or deluded by false confidence in themselves, so as to suppose that they have no need of the righteousness of faith, the apostle proceeds in the first place to arouse them from their indifference, and to convince them of their iniquity. He begins by proving that the whole human race are most ungrateful, because they do not acknowledge the Creator, though surrounded by his works; or, if they profess to honour his name, yet profane it by following after vanity. Thus they had proceeded to the vilest and most detestable transgressions, which they knew to be wrong; these the apostle enumerates, as making them justly obnoxious to the judgments of God.

II. St. Paul then, addressing himself to the jews, notices the two divisions of mankind, jews and gentiles; depriving each of their false excuses, and placing them separately before the Divine

tribunal. The gentiles being convicted by their own consciences, which were to them instead of law; the jews having the written law, and being proved transgressors thereby, could not extenuate their iniquity. He shows that they did not excel others by the right of their covenant with God since they had departed from it by their own unfaithfulness.

III. The apostle, that he may not be considered as intimating that God's promises were unsure, allows that the jews have some advantages from the covenant, but only proceeding from the Divine mercy, not from their own merits, which left them upon an equality with the gentile. He then establishes, from the authority of scripture, that the jews and the gentiles are all sinners; therefore justification by deeds of law, that is, on the score of merit, or on the ground of perfect obedience, is impossible; for, inasmuch as all men have sinned against the law of God, all are under its condemnation, and therefore grace, or mercy alone can save them from perdition. Having thus deprived the human race of all self-confidence in their own righteousness, he returns to the main subject—justification by faith, and how we may thereby be partakers of the righteousness of Christ. And that the jew may not seek to restrict Divine grace to his own nation the apostle states that the gentiles also may claim it.

IV. The apostle continues his argument by referring to the example of Abraham, regarded by the jews as the father of the faithful, and the pattern of righteousness. Having shown that Abraham was justified by faith, he directs others into the same path. He then more fully urges that there is no reason why the jews should exalt themselves above the gentiles, since they stand on equal grounds with respect to their common felicity, for the scripture states, that righteousness was conferred on Abraham while in uncircumcision. He adds, that the promise of salvation depend only on the goodness of God, for if it rests upon the law, it cannot give peace to the conscience. The faith of Abraham, as exhibited in his simple and full reliance upon the power of God, is the enlarged upon. He states that these examples were not written for Abraham's sake only, but for ours also, to whom, if we believe, faith shall be reckoned likewise for righteousness.

V. The apostle briefly notices the fruit and effect of the righteousness of faith—peace with God, support and consolation in the midst of trials and sufferings, a hope which makes not ashamed and cannot be disappointed, and enlarges in illustrating this subject. He shows how much those who are already redeemed and reconciled to God, may expect from his love, which has been so largely bestowed upon lost sinners, that he gave his only begotten and well beloved Son for their salvation. And, that it is perfectly consistent for God to extend these blessings to all, both jew and gentiles, is shown by the fact, that all have shared in the evils which flowed from the apostasy of our original progenitors. He then contrasts sin with free justification, Christ with Adam, death with life, the law with grace; whence he fully shows that our sins, however great or numerous are overcome by grace.

This is *Christ our justification* set forth. The apostle next exhibits *Christ our sanctification*.

VI. This chapter teaches us that we are not so free from sin through faith, that we should be idle, and careless, and confident respecting ourselves, as though there were now no more sin in us. The apostle meets the objection raised against the doctrine of free justification, as tending to encourage sin, showing the incongruity and impossibility of this. He shows that sanctification is to be obtained in Christ, and urges that we cannot participate in his righteousness unless at the same time we are sanctified. So that none can put on the righteousness of Christ without regeneration. From thence he exhorts to purity and holiness, which must be manifest in those who have been translated from a kingdom of sin to a kingdom of righteousness.

VII. The apostle here proceeds with an argument concerning the use of the law, and states its inability to do any thing but cause our condemnation, as a reason for our being freed from its power. But he shows it is our fault that the law which was given for life, has yielded cause for death. He then describes the struggle between the Spirit and the flesh, which the sons of God feel in themselves, as long as they are imprisoned in this mortal body, since they carry about with them the remains of evil desires, which constantly strive to draw them from obedience to the law. And this strife is in some more and in some less, as the spirit or the flesh is the stronger.

VIII. This chapter contains much consolation to the consciences of the faithful, lest they should be cast down when they hear of the imperfect extent of their obedience. But that the unholy might not by this means indulge in false security, the apostle shows that this blessing belongs only to the regenerate, in whom the influences of the Spirit of God are lively, and increase. He explains that all who are made partakers of the Lord Christ by his Spirit, are out of danger of condemnation, although not completely freed from the burden of sin; and also that all who remain in the flesh, without being sanctified by the Spirit, are not partakers of this great blessing. He shows how certain our confidence is, when the Spirit of God drives away all doubt and fear, and that the security of eternal life cannot be interrupted by the miseries to which we are subject in this mortal state, for all our present sufferings will be regarded as nothing, when compared with the excellency of salvation in Christ; while the gospel affords the only true consolation under the various troubles of the present life. He concludes with a very full and magnificent statement of the certainty of a christian's confidence in the Saviour's promise of future and eternal glory to all who love him.

IX. Here the apostle meets the feelings of concern with which many had witnessed the state of the jews as cast out from Christ, inferring thence that the covenant was taken from the posterity of Abraham, who despised the fulfilling of the covenant, or thought that he could not be the promised Messiah, as not caring more for Israel. He begins by speaking of his own love to his nation, and proceeds to meet the difficulties arising from their blindness. He shows that there are two descriptions of children of Abraham, that all the descendants of the patriarch according to the flesh, ought not to be reckoned among his seed, as partakers of the grace of the covenant; and, on the other hand, that strangers, if grafted in by faith, are reckoned as sons. Referring to the example of Esau and Jacob, he again directs attention to the Divine election, as that on which the whole must depend, and since this is founded only on the Divine mercy, its cause cannot be sought in the worth of man. Here he discusses the objections raised against God's dealings with his sinful creatures, when he makes some of them distinguished subjects of his mercy, and passes by others.

Towards the close of the chapter, he proves that the prophets had borne testimony, both to the calling of the gentiles and the rejection of the jews.

X. The apostle again testifies his love to the jews, and states that vain confidence in their works had caused their ruin. He meets any excuse which may be alleged from the law, and adds that the law leads to the righteousness which is by faith, and that it is offered to all nations by the Divine goodness, but is taken hold upon by those whom God has enlightened with his special grace. He refers to the predictions of Isaiah as expressly foretelling the calling of the gentiles, and to those of Moses as predicting the hardening of the jews.

XI. The question still remained, whether there was any difference between the seed of Abraham and other nations, according to God's covenant. The apostle advises not to limit the work of the Lord to outward appearances, since the elect are often unnoticed. Elijah thus had been mistaken when he thought that he was the only follower of God remaining in the land; and we are not to be troubled on account of the multitude of unbelievers who hate the gospel. He declares that the covenant of the Lord is also found in the posterity of Abraham after the flesh, but with such only as are the remnant according to the election of grace. The apostle then addresses the gentiles, to prevent them from assuming on account of their adoption, and boasting over the jews as a rejected people, since they have nothing in which they excel but by the favour of the Lord, which should rather be an incentive to humility. Nor had God's favour forsaken the jews, for they would be provoked by the faith of the gentiles, to emulate them, so that the Lord will thus gather together all his own Israel. And if their rejection is attended with consequences so important, surely their reception again will fill the world with its happy effects.

The rest of the epistle is hortatory, suitable for christians in every age, but especially warning those at Rome against the errors to which they were exposed.

XII. The christian is here instructed by general precepts, how to direct his life and conversation. Those are the right works of a christian man which spring out of faith; for faith keeps not holiday, nor suffers any man to be idle where it dwells.

XIII. The contents of this chapter chiefly show that the christian is to be subject to the civil powers, and that this obedience is the result of christian charity or love.

XIV. Many were very strict in observing the mosaic ceremonial, and others designedly manifested contempt for them. Both of these went too far. The apostle therefore exhorts both to moderation: the latter he cautions against indulging a haughty spirit of contempt; the former against bitterness. At the same time he shows that the best way to promote christian liberty, is to keep within the bounds of love and education. He advocates the interest of the weak, and cautions all against opposing the voice of conscience, admonishing the gentiles to respect the statutes of their Jewish brethren.

XV. In conclusion is shown that those who are endowed with strength should exert it to comfort the weak. And since the mosaic ceremonial caused frequent dissensions between the jews and the gentiles, he endeavours to calm this spirit, teaching both parties that salvation is only obtained by the mercy of God, and in reliance thereon it is their duty to lay aside all haughtiness of spirit, and being united by grace, mutually to support each other in hope of the same inheritance.

XVI. The last chapter almost wholly consists of salutations, but is interspersed with some admirable precepts, and closes with an excellent prayer.

We find in this epistle plentifully, whatever christian men or women ought to learn and know. That is, what the law, the gospel, sin, grace, faith, righteousness, Christ, God, good works, love, hope, and the cross are; and wherein the strength of all that pertains to the christian faith stands; and how a christian man ought to behave himself to every one, be they believers or unbelievers good or bad, strong or weak, friends or foes; and, in conclusion, how we are to conduct ourselves both towards God and ourselves also. And all things are fully grounded in the scriptures, and declared with examples, so that a man can desire no more. Wherefore it appears evidently, that Paul's object was to comprehend briefly in his epistle the whole learning of Christ's gospel, and thus prepared an introduction unto the study of the old testament. For without doubt, whosoever has this epistle perfectly in his heart, the same has the light and the effect of the old testament with him. Wherefore let every man, without exception, exercise himself therein diligently, and read night and day continually, until he is fully acquainted therewith.

Now, reader, according to the order of Paul's writing, even so do thou. First, behold thyself diligently in the law of God, and see there thy just condemnation. Secondly, turn thine eyes to Christ, and see there the exceeding mercy of thy most kind and loving Father. Thirdly, remember that Christ made not this atonement that thou shouldst offend God again; neither did he for thy sins, that thou shouldst live still in them, neither cleanse he thee, that thou shouldst tarry on, as a slave, where thou old puddle again; but that thou shouldst be a new creature, and live a new life, after the will of God, and not of the flesh. And be diligent, lest through thine own negligence and unthankfulness, thou lose this favour and mercy again.

The preceding analysis is from *Calvin, Luther, and Tindal*, with a few additions from the recent commentary of *Stuart*.

In reference to this epistle we may further use the words of *T. Adam*. "The scripture doctrine of redemption is the best foundation of the best morality, and leads to such knowledge of God and ourselves, as we never could have had without it; but then the gratitude, love, fidelity, devotion, and purity of heart arising from it, necessarily suppose a sense and belief of redeeming mercy going before. Let errors be guarded against, but not by explaining away the nature of saving faith; not by fixing on a wrong object, or any thing for life, except Christ himself, as the Lord our righteousness; not by giving up the foundation-truth of the gospel; which so long as God is just, and man is sinful: of St. Paul's writings have any credit in the world, will appear to be this:—That, being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through Jesus Christ our Lord; and that, as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of One shall many be made righteous, Rom. 5, 1—19."

CHAPTER I.

The apostle Paul, by way of introduction to the whole epistle, asserts his commission, 1-6. Salutes the saints at Rome, 7. Blesses God, and prays for them, 8-10. Expresses his desire and purpose to see and preach to them, 11-15. He then enters on his main design about the gospel way of justification by faith, for jews and gentiles, 16, 17. And sets forth the sins of the gentiles, to show that they could not be justified by the law of nature, 18-32.

Ver. 1-7. This letter was written to the christians at Rome by Paul, once a persecutor of the church, but who now was a servant of Christ, called his apostle, having been separated and appointed by the choice and effectual calling of God, to preach his gospel to the world, and to spend his life in promoting it.

The doctrine of which he wrote was no new invention, but set forth the fulfilment of the promises made in the sacred scriptures by the prophets. It had respect to the Son of God, even Jesus the Saviour, the promised Messiah, who was descended from David in his human nature, but was also declared to be the Son of God by the Divine power which raised him from the dead.

Observe, when Paul mentions Christ, how he adds together his names and titles, his Son Jesus Christ, our Lord, as one that took pleasure in speaking of him; and, having mentioned him, he cannot go on in his discourse without some expression of love and honour, as here, where he gives a summary of the gospel doctrine concerning Christ's two natures in one person.

From this glorious Person, whose resurrection thus had fully agreed with the testimony of the Spirit of holiness, spoken through the ancient prophets, proving him to be truly and properly the Son of God in human nature, Paul had received pardoning mercy and converting grace. He was employed as an instrument to bring sinners of all nations to the obedience of faith, by accepting the Redeemer's mercy and becoming subject to him, for the honour of his name, by their salvation and service.

Observe the description here given of the christian profession; it is obedience to the faith; it does not consist in a notional knowledge or a bare assent, much less does it consist in perverse

disputings, but in obedience. The act of faith is the obedience of the understanding to God revealing, and the product of that, is the obedience of the will to God commanding.

All those, and those only, are brought to obedience of the faith, who are effectually called of Jesus Christ.

Among this happy and favoured company were those, by whom the apostle wrote, and he addressed his letter not to the citizens of Rome in general, but to all those in that city who had been called to be, or were denominated saints; that is, holy, separated, and sanctified persons, partakers of Divine grace, and devoted to the service of God—thus evidenced to be beloved by Him, interested in his redemption, and heirs of his everlasting kingdom. All the professing christians in Rome, whether jews or gentiles originally, whether high or low, bond or free, learned or unlearned, rich or poor, were one together in Christ Jesus.

Here is, 1. The privilege of christians; they are beloved of God, they are members of that body which is beloved. 2. The duty of christians; and that is to be holy, for hereto are they called, called to be saints. Saints, and only saints, are beloved of God with a special and peculiar love. Called saints, saints in profession; it were well if all that are called saints were saints indeed: they that are called saints should labour to answer to the name; it will be of no avail at the great day to have been called saints, if we are not really so. These the apostle saluted by wishing them grace and peace—grace to sanctify their souls, and peace to comfort their hearts, as springing from the free mercy of God, the reconciled Father of all believers, and coming to them through the person, merits, and mediation of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the customary apostolical salutation.

A servant of Jesus Christ, is the highest title that can be given to man, and that of a minister or an apostle, only specifies the particular service or employment. All thus privileged have been called by Divine grace out of their natural state of darkness and alienation from God; thus they have been taught to believe and adorn the gospel of God. This gospel has been the only sure hope of sinful man from the beginning. Christ is the great subject of it, accord-

ing to the testimony of the Spirit of holiness by the prophets, and the demonstration of his resurrection. From his fulness all his servants have received; he gives grace to the sinner and authority to the minister, but in vain do any assume to have received pardon or authority, whose lives evidence that they have not received regenerating grace. Happy are those called "Jesus Christ to be his saints, and devoted to him. They should cordially desire the increase of grace and peace; without grace there can be no substantial peace, and, as it ripens to perfect holiness, increase of peace may be expected. These, then, are the great blessings we are to seek for ourselves and all around us, in preference to any earthly good; and they must be sought from the mercy of God our Father, by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and by reliance on his merits and mediation.

4. "The Spirit of holiness." This expression is generally considered as denoting the Holy Spirit, but some view it as referring to the Divine nature of Christ, his holy and blessed spiritual nature. *Guyse* says, If the Spirit of holiness, is here considered as expressive of the sense in which Christ was the Son of God, it evidently signifies his own Divine nature, in opposition to what he was according to the flesh, and so the antithesis is very beautiful between "according to the Spirit" here, and "according to the flesh," ver. 3. But if we consider it as the principle of the power by which Christ was raised from the dead, for demonstrating him to be the Son of God, it may signify either his own Divine nature, or the Holy Spirit, the third Person in the adorable Trinity.

Ver. 8—15. The apostle assures the saints at Rome, that, though personally a stranger to them, yet he was thankful for the mercy shown to them; as their faith in Christ, and its happy effect upon their conduct, were spoken of in every part of the world. It is good to begin every thing with blessing God, and in all our thanksgivings it is good for us to look upon God as our God; while all our duties and performances, our praises as well as prayers, are pleasing to God only through Jesus Christ.

We must express our love for our friends, not only by praying for them, but by praising God for them. God is to have the glory of all the comfort we have in our friends. Paul could solemnly appeal to God, whom he worshipped with perseverance and fervency, according to his knowledge of the gospel, that

he prayed for them all. One of the greatest kindnesses we can do our friends, and sometimes the only kindness that is in our power, is, by prayer, to commend them to the loving-kindness of God. From St. Paul's example here we may learn, 1. Constancy in prayer; always, without ceasing. 2. Charity in prayer; I make mention of you. Though he had no particular acquaintance with them, yet he prayed for them; not only for all saints in general, but he made express mention of these. We are likely to have the most comfort in those friends for whom we pray most. God is particularly a witness to our secret prayers; our Father sees in secret.

Especially he besought the Lord to enable him to go among them after so many disappointments, for he greatly desired to impart to them spiritual gifts, in order to their establishment in the faith. As, in our purposes, so in our desires, we must still remember to insert thus, If the Lord will, James 4. 15. Our journeys are made prosperous or otherwise, according to the will of God.

By spiritual gift the apostle probably means some advancement in spiritual knowledge and experience, through the instrumentality of his ministry.—(25)

He desired that they might be edified, that he might share the comfort bestowed on them, and rejoice in ministering to their joy, as well as in conferring with them concerning that faith, which was held both by him and by them. The best saints, while they are in this world, have need to be more and more established; and spiritual gifts are of special use for our establishment. And that he might be comforted. What he heard of their flourishing in grace was so much a joy to him, that it must needs be much more so to behold it. Paul could take comfort in the fruit of the labours of other ministers. It is very refreshing to Christians to confer about their spiritual concerns. Let us endeavour to follow Paul as he followed Christ, and long for opportunities of usefulness as worldly men do for a prosperous trade, accounting that the most successful journey or undertaking in which most good has been done. We are earnestly to pray for such opportunities, and readily to impart to others what God has intrusted to us, rejoicing to make others joyful, and especially taking

pleasure in communing with those who believe the same things with us.

The apostle had often been hindered from coming to Rome, being desirous to have some fruit of his ministry there as elsewhere; for as he had been so marvelously converted, and intrusted with a dispensation of the gospel, so he deemed himself bound to labour for the salvation of men, especially amongst the gentiles. The gifts and abilities which he had, made him a debtor; for they were talents he was intrusted with, to employ for his Master's honour. All our receivings put us in debt; we are but stewards. His office made him a debtor; he was a debtor as he was an apostle, he was called and sent to work. This he considered as a debt, which he owed both to the civilized and ruder nations, to the learned and the unlearned, and was ready to preach the gospel at Rome also. Though a public place, though a perilous place, yet Paul was ready to run the risk at Rome. He says, I am ready. It denotes great readiness of mind, and that he was forward to it. It is indeed well to be ready to meet every opportunity of doing or getting good.

Though our good purposes may often be hindered, we are not to desist. We are still to desire and to seek to bring forth fruit. If redeemed by the blood, and converted by the grace of the Lord Jesus, we are altogether his: and for his sake we are debtors to all men, to do them all the good we can. Such services are our bounden duty.

8 The sense appears to be, "I thank Him who has become my God, through the mediation of Christ."—*Bloomfield*.

Ver. 16, 17. In these verses the apostle opens the design, and lays the groundwork of the whole epistle: in which he brings forward a charge of sin against all flesh; declares the only method of deliverance from the condemnation of it, by faith in the mercy of God, through Jesus Christ; and then builds upon it purity of heart, grateful obedience, and earnest desires of proficiency in all those christian graces and tempers, which nothing but a lively faith in Christ can produce.—(71.)

He would not be ashamed of the gospel of Christ, even at Rome, where riches, pomp, and glory alone were admired, where genius and learning were

united with profligate manners, and, consequently, the humble doctrines of a religion which demands self-denial, would attract derision, and might make the preacher and professor of it feel ashamed. By saying that *he* shall not be ashamed, the apostle tells them that *they* ought not to be so.—(75)

Thus, however the noble, the learned, the proud, might despise the doctrines of the gospel, especially that of salvation by faith in Christ, Paul was in no wise ashamed of it, for he knew that Divine power was with this doctrine, for the salvation of every believer from the guilt and the power of sin and Satan. This had been first shown among the jews, in the conversion and holy lives of multitudes, and afterwards it produced the like effects among the gentiles. Therein God had been pleased to reveal not only the righteousness of his perfect character and government, and the righteousness of his holy law, but that also which he hath appointed for the justification of sinners before him. This might be called the righteousness of God, for it was the perfect obedience unto death, of the glorious Person who is God manifest in the flesh.

Our misery and ruin being the consequence of our iniquity, that which will show us the way of salvation must needs show us the way of justification, and that the gospel does. Thus the gospel makes known a righteousness. God is a just and holy God, and we are guilty sinners. It is necessary, therefore, that we have a righteousness wherein to appear before him; and, blessed be God, there is such a righteousness brought in by Messiah the Prince, Dan. 9. 24, and revealed in the gospel; a righteousness, that is, a gracious method of reconciliation and acceptance, notwithstanding the guilt of our sins. This evangelical righteousness is called the righteousness of God; it is of God's appointing, of God's approving and accepting. It is so called, to cut off all pretensions to a righteousness resulting from the merit of our own works. It is the righteousness of Christ, who is God, resulting from a satisfaction of infinite value.

This righteousness is revealed from faith to faith, it is altogether of faith; it is revealed in the faithfulness of God to the faith of the believer, according to the doctrine in the scriptures, that the

really just or righteous man should live, nor be accepted and saved, by faith, and not by works, Hab. 2 4. It is from faith ingrafting us into Christ, to faith denying virtue from him as our Root. "Just by faith," there is faith justifying; "live by faith," there is faith maintaining us; and so there is a righteousness from faith to faith. Faith is all in all, both in the beginning and progress of a christian life. It is not from faith to works, as if faith put us into a justified state, and then works preserved and maintained us in it; but it is all along from faith to faith; it is increasing, continuing, persevering faith; faith pressing forward, and getting ground of unbelief. To use the words of *Parr*, Let others go from infidelity to contumacy, from contumacy to damnation, but let us go from righteousness to righteousness, from faith to faith, that we may also go from death to life, from deserved shame to undeserved glory: which God grant.

This righteousness furnishes the sinner with such motives and prospects, that it is in every respect suited to render him devoted to God, and holy in all his conversation.

Let us not for a moment allow that absurd and hateful shame, which the censure and contempt of the wicked, against the gospel, often excite in our minds. Let us be ready to profess and to declare the doctrine of the cross of Christ before all men. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed, his way of justification and sanctification is opened, sinners are taught to trust in him, and to come before him, by faith in his mercy, through the righteousness, atonement, and intercession of his beloved Son.

17. "By faith is revealed to faith" *Doddridge* "Having its beginning in faith, it is perfected in faith," *Shuttleworth*.

Ver. 18—25. The apostle enters upon his main subject, ver. 18—20, and begins to show that all men need the salvation of the gospel, because none could obtain the favour of God, or escape his wrath by their own works, however ignorant persons might imagine that men's virtues, whether real or supposed, would atone for their vices.

No man can plead that he has fulfilled all his obligations to God and to his neighbour; nor can any truly say

that he has fully acted up to the light afforded him.

The sinfulness of man is described, ver. 18; the apostle reduces it to two heads, ungodliness and unrighteousness; ungodliness against the laws of the first table, unrighteousness against those of the second. He shows the cause of that sinfulness, which is, holding the truth in unrighteousness. They had some ideas of the being of God, and of the difference of good and evil; but they held them in unrighteousness, that is, they knew and professed them as if they agreed with their wicked courses. An unrighteous wicked heart is the dungeon, in which many a good truth is detained and buried. He shows the displeasure of God against it; the wrath of God is revealed from heaven; not only in the written word, which is given by inspiration of God; the gentiles had not that, but in the providences of God. His judgments executed upon sinners, do not come by chance, nor are they to be ascribed to second causes, but they are a revelation from heaven. Or, wrath from heaven is revealed; it is not the wrath of a man like ourselves, but wrath from God, therefore the more terrible, and wholly unavoidable. All were acquainted with some truths concerning their moral duties, and all might have known and pursued them more than they did, had it not been for love of sin. No one of any sect or nation perfectly lives up to his own principles. All, more or less, do what they know to be wrong, and omit what they know to be right, so that the plea of ignorance cannot be admitted from any. Finite understandings cannot perfectly know an infinite Being; but, blessed be God, there is that which may be known, enough to lead us to our chief end, the glorifying and enjoying of him.

The apostle proceeds to illustrate this general principle by the state of the gentile world. Though they had not the light of revelation, the works of creation preached to them. Being endowed with natural powers, they could not have failed to know much of the Divine character and will, had it not been for the depravity of their hearts. Our Creator's invisible power and Godhead are so clearly shown in the works he has made, that even idolaters and wicked gentiles are left without excuse. Many

of them, when they had acquired some just notions of the Deity and his worship, continued to act in opposition to their knowledge, from carnal motives. Instead of glorifying God according to their measure of information, their pride and carnal enmity led them to indulge vain conjectures and reasonings, till their professed and boasted wisdom issued in palpable and degrading folly.

In their notions of God, and the creation of the world, and the origin of mankind, and the chief good, when they quitted the plain truth, they soon disputed themselves into a thousand vain and foolish fancies.

Thus idolatry was followed, and rational creatures exchanged the worship of the glorious Creator, for that of brutes, reptiles, or senseless images. They continued to wander from God, till all traces of true religion must have been lost, had not the revelation of the gospel prevented it. For whatever proud speculators may pretend as to the sufficiency of man's reason to discover divine truth, and moral obligation, or to regulate man's practice, facts cannot be denied. They plainly show, that as far as God has, in awful displeasure, left men to themselves, they have dishonoured him by the most absurd idolatries and superstitions; and have degraded themselves by vile affections and abominable practices. This was the consequence of their having changed the truths respecting God, which were made known to them, for the basest falsehoods and delusions of the devil, and the sophistries resulting from their own reasonings.

It is observable, that upon the mention of the dishonour done to God by the idolatry of the gentiles, the apostle, in the midst of his discourse, expresses himself with awful adoration of God. Who is blessed for ever Amen. Though there are those that do not glorify God, yet he is glorified, and will be glorified to eternity.

Ver. 26—32. In the horrid depravity of the heathen, our Lord's words were verified. "Light was come into the world, but men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil; for he that doeth evil hateth the light." This observation holds true, equally of men who extinguish the light of nature,

as of those who shut their eyes against the brighter beams of revelation. The truth was not to their taste. They preferred any absurdity which would not seem to reprove their evil deeds. And we are all sensible how soon a man will contrive, in opposition to the strongest evidences, to reason himself out of the belief of that which he dislikes.—(25)

Those who dishonoured God, were given up to vile affections to dishonour themselves. A man cannot be delivered to greater slavery than to be given up to his own lusts. As the gentiles did not like to retain God in their knowledge, but preferred idols to him, and their sinful pursuits to his ways, so he gave them up to a reprobate mind, whereby they committed crimes wholly inconsistent with reason and their own welfare. They did not retain God in their knowledge because they did not like it. They would neither know nor do any thing but just what pleased themselves. It is the temper of carnal hearts, the pleasing of themselves is their highest end. There are many who have God in their knowledge, they cannot help it, the light shines so fully in their faces; but they do not retain him there. They say to the Almighty, Depart, Job 21. 11; and they therefore do not retain God in their knowledge; because that thwarts and contradicts their lusts, they do not like it. They proceeded to such wickedness as to practise all sorts of iniquity without remorse.

To do those things which are not convenient, may seem to bespeak a diminutive evil, but here it expresses the grossest enormities; things that contradict the very light and law of nature. The apostle subjoins a black list of those unbecoming things which the gentiles were guilty of, being delivered up to a reprobate mind. No wickedness so heinous, so contrary to the light of nature, to the law of nations, and to all the interests of mankind, but a reprobate mind will comply with it. By the histories of those times, especially the accounts we have of the then prevailing dispositions and practices of the Romans, it appears that these were then reigning sins. Here are no less than twenty-three several sorts of sins and sinners specified, ver. 29—31. Surely here is enough to humble us all, in the sense of our original corruption,

And even those among them who were convinced that these things were criminal, deserving condemnation and death, continued to practise and delight in them, and honoured others who committed such things. A most horrid example here given to us of the moral depravity of the Greeks and Romans, who lost all their prosperity, elegance, and learning. And the student of the history of actions by the law of God, will perceive the character here drawn is a faithful likeness.

Christianity has had a considerable effect upon our laws and customs even in outward things, and there are many real Christians at the present day; yet what multitudes act mainly according to the delineation before us. Thus men show themselves haters of God and his holy services, not only by doing such things as he has forbidden, but by countenancing those who dishonour his name. While the pious servants of God are humiliated and despised. Our own sins are much aggravated by our concurrence with and complacency in the sins of others. There is indeed cause for gratitude so far as we have been restrained from the enormities in which so many of our apostate race indulge.

The nature of man under every denomination, pagan or christian, is still the same, and the charges of the apostle apply more or less to the state and character of mankind at all times, till brought to unfeigned submission to the birth of Christ, and renewed by Divine power. There never yet was a man upon earth who had not reason to lament his natural fearlessness of sin, strength of corruption, and secret repugnance to the will of God. Therefore this chapter is a call to self-examination, the result of which will be, conviction of sin, and of the necessity of deliverance from a state of condemnation—either solely in virtue of our own endeavours, repentance, and reformation—or by a method of God's revealing. Which of the two will avail to the salvation of sinners, and conduce most to the glory of God, in the freeness of his grace, and the vindication and establishment of his law, as well as to the ease and satisfaction of our own minds, and our return to him in repentance and obedience, it is the object of this epistle to determine.—(71.)

19. "The characteristics of God."—*J. P. Smith.*
20. "For his invisible things, even his eternal power and Godhead, since the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, so they are inexcusable."—*Macnight.*

23. The heathen writers describe the absurd and vile objects worshipped by the heathens. Idolatry of every kind sprang from the proneness of men to ascribe the benefits they enjoyed, rather to the agency of such secondary causes as fell within the range of their senses, than to that of a supreme Providence.—*Bloomfield.*

31. "Without natural affection," the exposing new-born infants, and putting aged parents to death, are striking instances of the correctness of this declaration.

32. To behold vice with complacency is the last stage of a degenerate mind.—*Cor.*

This picture is indeed a dreadful one; it is truly revolting in every sense of the word. But that it is just, nay, that it actually comes short of the real state of things, particularly on the score of impurity, there cannot be the least doubt in any man, who is acquainted with the ancient state of the heathen world. Poets, philosophers, and historians have condemned the works of Paul; and the relics of ancient cities in Italy, (in pictures, carvings, statues, &c.) cities destroyed near the time when the apostle lived, bear most ample testimony to what he has said of their shameless profligacy. He does not mean to asport of every individual among the heathen, that he stood chargeable with each and every crime here specified, but that these and other vices were notorious and common among the heathen, and that every individual capable of sinning, philosophers and common people, stood chargeable in a greater or less degree with some of them.—*Stuart.*

CHAPTER II.

The apostle proves, in general, that the Jews were as incapable of being justified by the law of Moses, as the Gentiles were by the law of nature, 1-16. And gives a particular account of the sins of the Jews, who justified all their vain confidences in their external privileges, as if these could recommend them to God's acceptance, 17-29.

Ver. 1-6. The apostle, having convicted the Gentiles of sin, now proceeds to show that the Jews are under the same condemnation. He proves that they, having daringly despised the goodness, and broken the law of God, were as obnoxious to his wrath as the Gentiles, and therefore could not pretend to arrogate the Divine mercy to themselves; for in thus condemning the Gentiles, they, in fact, condemned themselves. There was no need, as in the case of the Gentile, to prove to the Jew that he was under a law, that being his great boast; but there was great need to

root out the prejudices which led him to make so wide a distinction between jews and gentiles as to suppose that a jew might safely continue in sins which would be fatal to a gentile. —(75)

They deemed themselves a holy people, and entitled to their privileges by right, while they copied the vices of the heathen, acting in opposition to the light afforded them, and like the gentiles, they were unthankful, rebellious, and unrighteous. But all who act thus, of every nation, age, and description, must be reminded that assuredly the judgment of God will be executed according to their real character. For when any had committed a crime which he judged deserving of punishment in others, how could he be so foolish as to suppose he should himself escape the judgment of God?

Observe how it is put to the sinner's conscience; ver. 3. Thinkest thou this, O man? O man, a rational creature, made by God, subject under him, accountable to him, dependent on him.

The case is so plain, that we may venture to appeal to the sinner's own thoughts; "Canst thou think that thou shalt escape the judgment of God, the righteous Judge of all?" Means are mercies, and the more light we sin against, the more law we sin against. Low and mean thoughts of the Divine goodness are at the root of a great deal of sin. There is in every wilful sin contempt of the goodness of God.

The branches of man's disobedience are very various, but all spring from the same root. We may be, and are, very incompetent judges of the comparative guilt of man's conduct; but it is certain that the judgment of God will be according to truth, against all who break his law, and reject his grace.

God had distinguished the jews in every age, both by temporal and spiritual benefits, and had exercised unspeakable goodness and forbearance towards them; he had even sent his Son, and had directed the gospel offers first to be made to them. The more kindness God exercises, the greater aggravation there is in the sinner's disobedience. The patience of God gives the sinner time and opportunity; and the discoveries of his mercy supply motives and encouragements for repentance; and those who despise the riches of his

goodness, will find that the impenitent hearts have let treasure up wrath against judgment. This is the doom of every sinner that repents not. What is this repentance? sorrow and regret for what is done amiss. It implies a mind to reverse its act. Repentance may arise, 1, from the threat of punishment, and an experience of the evil consequences of what we do; or, 2, it may proceed from a change in the state of the understanding, the choice of the mind its former overtakes the wicked, hopeless despair they see the necessity of judgment; the latter is the grace unto life, here spoken of, to which the goodness of God would lead us. In the first, the heart has undergone a real change. Remove the hindrance and all will return to its former state. But in true repentance, there must be a hatred of former sinfulness, arising from a change wrought in the state of the mind, which disposes it to choose the good and to refuse the evil, which awakens it to a sense of the defilement of sin and the beauty of holiness. It implies also a sense of inward depravity, and wretchedness, which though unfelt by the self-justified, is charged upon all men by the Divine word. Such is the great change implied in repentance, it is conversion, and is enforced upon every human being who would flee from the wrath to come. —(25.)

The ruin of sinners is their walking after a hard and impenitent heart, being led by it. To sin, is to walk in the way of the heart; and when that is a hard and impenitent heart, hard by long custom, besides that which is natural, how desperate must the course needs be! The provocation is expressed by treasuring up wrath. Those that go on in a course of sin, are treasuring up unto themselves wrath. A treasure denotes abundance, it is a treasure that will be spending to eternity, but never exhausted; and yet sinners are still adding to it as to a treasure!

And if the jews in their vain confidence continued to reject the gospel, and to disobey God's commandments, they, as well as all others who employ the day of mercy in hardening their hearts, because of the Divine goodness,

will find at the day of judgment that the Lord will manifest his justice; then rendering to every one according to his works, whether an obstinate unbeliever or a penitent who believed, loved, and trusted the Redeemer. He will reward every man, not according to learning, or wealth, but according to his deeds.—(84.)

It may be shown that the Jews at that period were guilty of the same vile practices as the heathen. Josephus says, that generation was far more enormously wicked than the people of Sodom.

4. The change of tense in scripture language, is sometimes used to represent duties as performed which ought to be done.—*T. H. Horne.*

Ver. 7—16. The apostle proceeds to mention the Jews more explicitly. As no man can be justified by a law which he transgresses, so they could not be justified by the law of Moses who did not enter into the spirit of that dispensation, having respect to the types and promises of a Saviour therein, and rendering upright habitual obedience to it. If then, a man embraces by faith the revelation of glory, honour, and immortality through the promised Messiah; if he cannot be satisfied with an earthly portion, but seeks a heavenly inheritance by faith in God's promises, and by patient continuance in well doing, he doubtless is in the way to eternal life. But if men quarrel with the precepts and dispensations of God's law, with his truths and ordinances, choosing rather to obey unrighteousness, and to continue the slaves of sin and Satan, such must sink under the displeasure of their justly offended Judge. Tribulation and anguish of spirit will be the certain portion of every soul of man who thus worketh evil. The Jew will have the first and most severe lot in this condemnation, though the Gentile will not escape punishment. Thus was pointed out the way whereby the Gentile could obtain eternal life, which mercy indeed was first offered to the Jews, but the Gentiles were by no means to be shut out from it, seeing God is no respecter of persons, Acts 10. 34, 35.

We here learn the effect of the Divine wrath against evil doers. We must remember that not outward actions only are intended, but words, and the acts of the inmost soul—intentions and purposes. We are also told that the cir-

cumstances in which the righteous enter into life, are glory, honour, and peace. In the description of the just man we notice the full demand of the law. It demands perfect obedience to the will of God, so far as known, it demands that the motives shall be pure, and therefore rejects all actions proceeding from earthly ambition, or ends. In the description of the unrighteous, contention is held forth as the principle of all evil; the object against which it is exhibited, are in effect God and his righteous will. The human will in reality is in a state of enmity against God. From this dislike proceeds the disposition to dispute against, and to evade what is required by truth and justice. It casts off the fear of God, and follows its own unrighteous inclination. The effect of this contentious spirit among the Gentiles had already been shown, and the apostle was about to trace the same bad principle of fallen nature in the conduct of the Jews.—(25)

No Gentiles could be found who had not acted contrary to the light of their own dispensation, and none of them could be justified by their own obedience. Those who, not having the written word, sin against the dictates of their own consciences, will be proved guilty and condemned by that rule; while those who have sinned against the law of God which was made known to them, will be judged and punished according to that law. The light of nature was to the Gentiles instead of a written law. Though they had not the written law, Ps. 147. 20, they had a guide not to the ceremonial, but to the moral law.

The Jews indeed were apt to imagine that the reading and hearing the law, with attention to the legal ceremonies, would justify them before God, notwithstanding their breaking the moral precepts. In this presumption they rejected the gospel, as do very many of professed Christians. But the apostle declared, that mere hearers of the law could not be justified by it. Even the Gentiles, who had not the written law, when by their natural sense of right and wrong, they performed such duties as the law required, were in this respect a law unto themselves. They had that within which directed them what to do by the light of nature. By the force and tendency of their natural notions and

dictates, they apprehended a clear and vast difference between good and evil. They did by nature the things contained in the law. They had a sense of justice and equity, honour and purity, love and charity; the light of nature taught obedience to parents, pity to the miserable, conservation of public peace and order; forbade murder, stealing, lying, perjury, &c. Their consciences, by their thoughts reasoning within themselves, actuated or excused themselves or one another, according to their conduct. The very gentiles could not but condemn themselves when they acted against their own consciences, ver. 15. Conscience is a witness, and first or last will bear witness. By turns, so some read; according as they observed or broke these natural laws and dictates, their consciences either acquitted or condemned them. All which evidenced they had that which was to them instead of a law, which they might have been governed by, and which will condemn them, because they were not so guided and governed by it. So that the guilty gentiles are left without excuse. God is justified in condemning them. They cannot plead ignorance, and therefore are likely to perish, if they have not something else to plead.

This was evidence or earnest of a future judgment, ver. 16. when God will judge the secret actions, thoughts, and affections of all men, in and by his Son Jesus Christ, which was a principal doctrine of the gospel—the gospel in general, called St. Paul's, because he was a preacher of it. It is good for us to get acquainted with what is revealed concerning that day. 1. There is a day set for a general judgment. 2. The judgment of that day. God shall judge by Jesus Christ, Acts 17. 31. Nothing speaks more terror to sinners, and more comfort to saints, than this, that Christ shall be the Judge. 3. The secrets of men shall then be judged. Secret services shall be then rewarded, secret sins shall be then punished, hidden things shall be brought to light. It will be the great discovering day, when that which is now done in corners, shall be proclaimed to all the world.

The apostle does not mean to show that the heathens actually knew and practised their duty, in such a sense as to escape condemnation, or to be entitled to a reward. He does not design to

furnish them with an excuse effect would have been. from the faith of Christ their guilt; which he does that they had a law which have conformed to, and disobedience subjected them to, as well as the jews, against argument which follows is perverted.—(71.)

12. *Middleton* observes that it is difficult to ascertain the various meaning of "law," in the epistles of St. Paul, of every rule of life, of every revelation, especially the mosaic law, and sometimes ceremonial part of it, as well as the moral. The English version having always said, "the law," whatever meaning is indicated in the original, has made this difficult epistle still more obscure, for the English reader is used to understand the term to mean the law of Moses, as in the evangelists. But here, as in most other places, the law, as the general moral law, seems meant, requiring moral or ceremonial obedience. See also note ch. 3. 19. Ch. 3. 31. clearly shows that the apostle's argument refers to the moral rather than the ceremonial law, as it cannot be supposed he designs to establish the latter.

13. Here the apostle treats not of the law of justification, which is faith, without the law; but of the difference between as shall be justified, and such as are not—

14. *J. P. Smith* says, the whole spirit and requirements of the moral law lie in the simple idea of justice; that is, rendering to every being that which in right he ought to have—The great commandment, Matt. 22. 38, is nothing but the demand of justice. He states that from this one source might be deduced, by plain and undeniable reasoning, all the requirements and prohibitions of the moral law. Consequently it is the same as the law of nature, or the collection of moral principles, which men in general, without any positive revelation, have the power and opportunity of inferring from their own feelings, wants, and wishes, acted upon by the occurrences of individual experience and social life.

Ver. 17—24. In the latter part of the chapter the apostle directs his discourse more closely to the jews, and shows what sins they were guilty of, notwithstanding their profession and vain pretensions. He had said, ver. 13, that not the hearers, but the doers of the law are justified; and he here applies that great truth to the jews. Suppose a jew resting his acceptance on the law, and boasting of a covenant relation with God. He thinks himself well acquainted with the will of God, and instructed in his law. In this confidence, he reckons himself qualified to teach the pagans, and considers them as ignorant, and mere children compared with himself. He had indeed knowledge of the

e truth, but it was a mere
 earance of the spiritual
 true meaning of the law,
 y understood, would lead
 the Redeemer whom it
 the law itself.

oast of God, ver. 17. How
 s may be perverted and
 elieving, humble, thankful
 God, is the root and sum-
 religion, Ps. 34. 2; Isa. 45.

or. 1. 31. But proud vainglo-
 boasting in God, and in the out-
 ard profession of his name, is the root
 and summary of all hypocrisy. Spirit-
 ual pride is the most dangerous of all
 kinds of pride.

In this form the man called a jew
 rested, without obeying the precepts, as
 if his work had been to instruct others,
 and not to be directed himself. A form
 of knowledge may deceive men, but can-
 not impose upon the piercing eye of the
 re-searching God. And it was no
 us that many of those jews who
 are most zealous for the law, were
 y of the very crimes so expressly
 dden. Though they boasted of the
 they dishonoured God by evidently
 making it. The name of Jehovah was
 blasphemed among the gentiles by the
 wickedness of the jews. A great evil of
 the sins of professors, is, the dishonour
 done to God and religion by their not
 living according to their profession.

Thus numbers who call themselves
 christians, and even have some right
 notions of the gospel as a system, deem
 themselves children of God, although
 they obey not the truth. Let us be very
 watchful over ourselves, for it is far
 more agreeable to the self-flattery of
 our hearts, to instruct others than to be
 taught ourselves. Many lay down good
 rules, but never practise them, but the
 discoveries of the great day will reveal
 their awful guilt. And many despise
 their more ignorant neighbours who
 rest in a dead form of godliness; yet
 they themselves trust in a form of know-
 ledge, equally void of life and power,
 while some glory in the gospel, whose
 unholy lives dishonour God and cause
 his name to be blasphemed.

18. *Beza* and others render, "And provest, or
 triest the things that differ."

17—20. This passage exhibits a faithful pic-
 ture of the national character of the jews, and
 shows how much they valued themselves upon
 their wisdom, and superior knowledge of religion,

arrogating to themselves the character of lights
 and instructors of the whole world, and regarding
 all the heathen with the utmost contempt.—
T. H. Horne.

Ver. 25—29. Notwithstanding this
 evil conduct, the jews relied on circum-
 cision as though it secured their covenant
 relation to God. But although the cere-
 monial law, and the rites connected there-
 with were profitable to the conscientious
 jew, ch. 3. 2, yet they could not profit
 the presumptuous transgressor, who
 rested in them, to the neglect of right-
 eousness by faith. Circumcision showed
 that a man was debtor to the law, while
 his transgressions cast him out of God's
 covenant, as if he had not been circum-
 cised. On the other hand, if a gentile,
 though not deemed one of God's true
 worshippers, should be made partaker
 of an inward spiritual change, and his
 conduct was according to the righteous-
 ness prescribed by the law, he would
 judge and condemn the jew, who,
 though outwardly under the law, had no
 inward disposition to obedience. Though
 Cornelius was a gentile, and uncircum-
 cised, yet, being a devout man, and one
 that feared God with all his house,
 Acts 10. 2, he was accepted, ver. 4.
 Doubtless, there were other such in-
 stances; and they were the uncircumci-
 sion that kept the righteousness of the
 law. He alone was to be deemed a jew,
 or one of God's chosen people, who had
 the mind of his believing and obedient
 forefathers. And that was the true cir-
 cumcision which was wrought in the
 heart by regeneration; according to the
 spiritual meaning, and not the mere
 letter of the law, producing inward con-
 formity of the judgment and affections
 to its holy precepts. Men would despise
 and hate this, but God would approve.

No forms, ordinances, or notions can
 profit without regenerating grace, which
 will always lead to seeking an interest
 in the righteousness of God by faith.
 For he is no more a christian now, than
 he was really a jew of old, who is one
 outwardly; neither is that baptism
 which is outward in the flesh: but he
 is the real christian, who is inwardly a
 true believer, with an obedient faith;
 and the true baptism is that of the
 heart, by the washing of regeneration,
 and the renewal of the Holy Ghost;
 producing a spiritual frame of mind, and
 vital subjection to truth in its holy im-
 port and tendency. Such a man will

not be approved by the zealots of any party, nor by the world, but he will be accepted of God, and at length welcomed with "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." As an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile, he will embrace the truth, attend the ordinances, and walk in the commandments of God, according to his views of them.

May these important truths sink deep into our hearts, and may we daily act under a lively impression of them. Does not the Spirit speak to us in these words? Our baptism verily profits if our hearts and lives are agreeable to the gospel; but if they contradict it, surely our baptism is no baptism; and, if the unbaptized heathens are better in their lives than we are, they shall judge and condemn us. Let us then pray that we may be made real christians, not outwardly but inwardly; in the heart and spirit, not in the letter; baptized, not with water only, but with the Holy Ghost, and let our praise be, not of men but of God. (83.)

25 *Bloomfield* says, How deeply rooted was the Jewish notion of the complete efficacy of circumcision to salvation, has been shown by *Grotius*, *Schoettgen*, and *Macknight*.

CHAPTER III.

The apostle answers several objections against what he had delivered in the foregoing chapter; and so clears the way to his further design, ver. 1—9. He asserts and proves, that all mankind, Jews as well as Gentiles, are sinners, 9—18. He applies all this to his principal point, concerning the justification of both Jews and Gentiles, as utterly unattainable by their own performances, and entirely owing to the free grace of God, through faith in the righteousness of Christ, 19—31.

Ver. 1—4. Disobedient Jews could not be saved, though they were of the circumcision, and pious Gentiles might be saved though uncircumcised—what advantage then had the Jew above the Gentile? It is here stated that they doubtless had benefit from that rite. The law and circumcision could not save them in or from their sins, yet they gave the Jews advantages for obtaining salvation. The stated services, the education in the knowledge of the true God and his service, and many peculiar favours shown to the posterity of Abra-

ham, all were means of great doubtless were made useful to a great version of many. But especially scriptures were committed to the written word of God continuing them through their generations to show them how to seek acceptance and to walk before him. In the Messiah was promised, his redemption, and kingdom were obtained, and many among them believed and found salvation by him. This apostle mentions with a "chiefly"—this was their principal privilege. The enjoyment of God's word and ordinances is the chief happiness of a people.

And what if even the greater part of the nation obstinately and wickedly rejected this Divine Saviour? Did their unbelief render the faithfulness of God ineffectual? He had fulfilled his promises to their fathers; and let none think that God had failed of his word, because he did not continue the same special favour to them, who went on to great lengths in wickedness. "Let it not be said that every man humbly acknowledge the truth and faithfulness of God.

Let God be true, but every man a liar; let us abide by this principle, that God is true to every word which he has spoken, and will let none of his oracles fall to the ground, though thereby we must consider men to be liars. It is better to question and to overthrow the credit of all the men in the world, than to doubt the faithfulness of God. All men are liars, compared with God. It is very comfortable, that when we find every man is a liar, no faith in man, that God is faithful. They speak vanity every one with his neighbour, but it is very comfortable to think that the words of the Lord are pure words, Ps. 12. 2, 6.

Let the rejection of the Messiah rest upon them and their hypocrisy, and not be supposed to reflect upon God's faithfulness; even as David, when he had committed grievous offences, acknowledged that God was thereby justified in his declarations concerning the desperate wickedness of the heart of man, Ps. 51. 4. Thus the Divine truth, justice, and mercy, more evidently appeared, and God is vindicated from the presumptuous charges, whereby men object to the testimonies of his word, the threatenings of his law, and the dispensations of his providence. It is our

conclusions concerning hers, to justify God, and maintain his justice, truth, A distinction must al- between the advantages what we deserve; between becoming accepted and t grace which teaches to se means. Many who are by peculiar privileges con- elief. But God's promises only to believers, therefore the elief of some, or of many professors, Anot make this faithfulness of no fect. He will fulfil his promises to us people, and execute his threatened vengeance upon unbelievers. The be- liever will be sure of God's truth and tice, even when his dispensations are k and obscure; being certain that Lord cannot mistake, deceive, or be ceived; though man is found deceit- fallible, and unholy.

Here must be censured in the strongest is, the mode of reasoning adopted by some fied opponents of the doctrines of grace, who deduce from reason what they imagine God t—what are his attributes—and how in con- dition to these, he must needs act in all cases circumstances; and then by these precon- ed notions—"as if by searching they found the Almighty to perfection"—regulate their el of the mysteries of revelation, admitting only so much as they judge suitable to the Di- vine character, and either contradicting, or ex- plaining away, what they think the Only-wise God ought not to have said or done.—*Fry.*

Ver. 5-8. Some carnal hearts might from hence take occasion to encourage themselves in sin. The apostle had said, that the universal guilt and cor- ruption of mankind, gave occasion to the manifestation of God's righteous- ness in Jesus Christ. Does one, "a man," suggest, that if all our sin be so far from overthrowing God's honour, then it commends it, and his ends are secured, then is it not unjust for God to punish sin and unbelief so severely? If the un- righteousness of the jews gave occasion to the calling in of the gentiles, and so to God's greater glory, why are the jews so much censured? Unbelieving hearts take any occasion to quarrel with God's proceedings. The apostle says, "I speak as a man," I object this as the lan- guage of carnal hearts, as a vain foolish proud creature. But, "far be it from us" to imagine such a thing. Suggestions that reflect dishonour upon God, and his justice and holiness, never are to be

parleyed with. Get thee behind me, Satan; never entertain such a thought. For then how shall God judge the world? ver. 6. The argument is much the same with that of Abraham, Gen. 18. 25. Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? No doubt, he shall. Sin has never the less of malignity and demerit in it, though God bring glory to himself out of it. The consideration of God's judging the world, should for ever silence all our doubtings of, and reflections upon his justice and equity. In fact, the wickedness and obstinate unbelief of the jews proved man's need of the righteousness of God by faith, and also his justice in punishing for sin. If he could not justly punish any crimes which were overruled to the dis- play of his glory, how could he be Judge of the world? It does not alter the evil nature of men's crimes, that God is able so to overrule them; therefore this never will interfere with the righteous- ness of his vengeance against them.

The former objection is repeated, ver. 7, 8, proud hearts will hold fast deceit. But, setting out the objection in its own colours, is sufficient to answer it. He supposes the sophisters to follow their objection thus, If my lie, my sin, (there is something of a lie in every sin, es- pecially in the sins of professors,) have occasioned the glorifying of God's truth and faithfulness, why should I be judged, and condemned as a sinner, and not rather thence take encouragement to go on in my sin, that grace may abound? An inference which at once appears too black to be argued, and only fit to be deeply abhorred. Daring sinners rather take occasion to boast in mis- chief, because the goodness of God en- dures continually, Ps. lii. 1. Let us do evil, that good may come, is oftener in the heart than in the mouth of sinners; few thus justify themselves in their wicked ways. Mentioning this wicked thought he observes, that there were those who charged such evil doctrines upon him and his fellow-ministers. It is no new thing for God's best people and ministers to be charged with holding doctrines and teaching things which they most detest and abhor.

He says no more by way of confu- tation, but that, whatever they them- selves may argue, the damnation of such persons is just. Those who deliberately

do evil, that good may come of it, will be so far from escaping, under the shelter of that excuse, that it will rather justify their damnation; and renders them the more inexcusable. Sinning upon such a surmise, and in such a confidence, their damnation is just; whatever excuses of this kind they may now please themselves with, none will stand good in the great day; but God will be justified in his proceedings.

The believer knows that duty belongs to him, and events to God; and that he must not commit any sin, or speak one falsehood, upon the hope, or even the assurance, that God would take occasion thereby to glorify himself. If any speak and act thus, without doubt their condemnation is just.

5. "The righteousness of God." *Guyse* paraphrases thus, "The justice of God in taking vengeance, (on sin,) and that glorious righteousness by which he justifies the most unworthy." He says, that the righteousness of God here principally signifies his justice in punishing sin, seems plain, from the close of the verse, and from the following. And yet as the righteousness, by and for which God justifies, is most commonly, if not always, intended by 'the righteousness of God,' in this epistle, that is also brought into the paraphrase. He observes that this phrase is to be taken in one or other of these senses wherever it occurs in this epistle.

Ver. 9—18. The apostle having removed these objections, revives his assertion of the general guilt and corruption of mankind, both jews and gentiles.

All are under sin. 1. Under the guilt of sin: as a burden, Psalm 38. 4, that will sink to the lowest hell: we are guilty before God, ver. 19. 2. Under the government and dominion of sin; as under a tyrant and cruel task-master; enslaved to it; under it as under a yoke; under the power of it, to work wickedness. And this the apostle states had been proved. It is a law term; we have charged them with it, and have made good our charge; which is here further illustrated by several passages of scriptures quoted from the Old Testament, which describe the corrupt and depraved state of all men, till grace restrain or change them: so that herein, as in a glass, all may plainly behold their natural face.

Observe, an habitual want of every thing that is good; there is none righteous, none that is governed by such a principle, none that retains any thing of that image of God, wherein man was

created. Those who through justified and sanctified, were them righteous by nature. understandeth. The unde blinded, depraved, pervert may justly be reckoned to l derstanding that do not seek The carnal mind is so far fr after God, that really it against him.

They are together become u ble. Those that have forsaken soon grow useless burdens. Those in state of sin, are the most unprofitable creatures under the sun. Even in those actions of sinners which have some good in them, there is a fundamental error in the principle and end. They are all gone out of the way. No wonder that those miss the right way, who do not seek after God. The corruption of mankind is an apostasy.

And what can be expected from such a race? By their filthy communications their throat is an open sepulchre; a nauseous infectious charnel house. Their tongues are mainly used in simulation, their slanders and flattery are as the venom of serpents. Their mouths are filled with imprecations and revilings; they are eager after revenge, ambition, and avarice. Not knowing the ways in which good men walk at peace with God, and with their neighbours, they go on in paths which lead to misery and ruin. They have cast the fear of God behind their backs. Great as our advantages are, these texts exactly describe multitudes who call themselves christians. Their principles and conduct evidently prove there is no fear of God before their eyes. The fear of God is here put for all practical religion, which consists in a serious regard to the word and will of God as our rule, to the honour and glory of God as our end. The wicked have not this before their eyes; they are governed by other rules, aim at other ends. Where no fear of God is, no good is to be expected.

Let us not turn from the mirror here held up before us. Let the word of God be as fire, searching the inward parts, for no outside gloss or polish will be a refuge from the purity and perfection of the Divine law. Are we really free from evil, even in our thoughts? The question as to all the

here mentioned is as to the intent of the heart.—(71.)

The verses appear to contain texts and messages in the Psalms and prophecies on the septuagint version, quoted applicable to the state of the Jews at that time. Psalms 14. 1—3; 53. 1—3; 5. 9; Isaiah 59. 7, 8; Ps 36. 1.

26. The apostle infers, that we must not vainly look for justification by the works of the law, and that it is to be obtained only by faith. Man, in his depraved state, under the power of corruption, could never, by any works of his own, gain acceptance with God; but it must be resolved purely into the free grace of God, given through Jesus Christ to all true believers, who receive it as a free gift. There are two things from which the apostle here argues—the guiltiness of man, to prove that we cannot be justified by the works of the law, and the glory of God, to prove that we must be justified by faith.

I. He argues from man's guilt, to show the folly of expecting justification by the works of the law. The argument is very plain: we can never be justified and saved by the law that we have broken. Concerning the guiltiness of man,

1. He fastens it particularly upon the Jews; for they made their boast of the law, and set up for justification by it. He had quoted several scriptures out of the Old Testament to show this corruption. The Jews boasted of their being under the law, and placed a great deal of confidence in that: but the law convicts and condemns, ver. 19. That all boasting may be silenced, 2. He extends it in general to all the world—that all the world may become guilty before God, may be proved guilty, liable to punishment, all by nature children of wrath, Eph. 2. 3. All must plead guilty; even those that stand most upon their own justification will certainly be cast. Guilty before God is a dreadful word, before an all-seeing God, who is not, nor can be, deceived in his judgment; before a just and righteous Judge, who will by no means clear the guilty. All are guilty, and therefore all have need of a righteousness wherein to appear before God. For all have sinned, ver. 23, all are sinners by nature, by practice, and have come short of the glory of God, have failed of that which

is the chief end of man. So come short, as not only not to win, but to be great losers. Come short of justification and acceptance with God, which is glory begun; come short of the holiness and sanctification which are the glorious image of God upon man; and have overthrown all hopes and expectations of being glorified with God in heaven, by any righteousness of their own. 3. Further, that none may expect justification by the law, he ascribes this conviction to the law, ver. 20. For by the law is the knowledge of sin. The law which convicts and condemns us, can never justify us. Surely no man can be justified by a law which condemns him for breaking it. There is no law of God which any man has kept; therefore no law by the deeds of which a man can be justified. If we compare our own hearts and lives with the rule, we shall discover wherein we have turned aside. Therefore by the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified in his sight. Observe, no flesh shall be justified, it is sinful and depraved; we are not justified, because we are flesh. The corruption in our nature, will for ever obstruct any justification by our own works; as the conscience stands in relation to God, in his sight, we cannot be justified by deeds of the law, Ps. 143. 2.

II. He argues from God's glory, to prove that justification must be expected only by faith in Christ's righteousness. There is no justification by the works of the law. Must guilty man then remain eternally under wrath? Is there no hope? Is the wound become incurable because of transgression? No, blessed be God, it is not, ver. 21, 22, there is another way laid open for us. This is called the righteousness of God, righteousness of his ordaining, and providing, and accepting. Concerning this righteousness of God, observe, that it is manifested. The gospel way of justification is a high-way, a plain way, it is laid open for us.

Now, under the gospel, a righteousness appointed by God, as the means of justification of sinners, without perfect obedience to law of any kind, made known; and it is no new method of justification, being established from the very beginning of the world, being taught both by the law and the prophets.—(100.)

It is by the faith of Jesus Christ, that faith which hath Jesus Christ for its object, an anointed Saviour, so Jesus Christ signifies Justifying faith respects Christ as a Saviour in all his three anointed offices, as Prophet, Priest, and King, trusting in him, accepting of him, and adhering to him, in all these. It is by this that we become interested in that righteousness which God hath ordained, and which Christ hath brought in. It is to all, and upon all them that believe Jews and gentiles are alike welcome to God through Christ, for there is no difference, his righteousness is upon all that believe, not only tendered to them, but put upon them as a crown, as a robe.

How is this for God's glory? It is for the glory of his grace ver 24 Justified freely by his grace not by the grace wrought in us, as some say, who confound justification and sanctification but by the gracious favour of God to us, without any merit in us. The grace of God communicated to us, comes freely, it is free grace, mere mercy, there is nothing in us to deserve such favours. It is all through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ. It comes freely unto us but Christ bought it, and paid the price. It is for the glory of his justice and his righteousness ver 25, 26 Jesus Christ is the great propitiation, or propitiatory sacrifice typified by the mercy seat. He is our throne of grace, in and through whom atonement is made for sin, and our persons and performances accepted of God, 1 John 2. He is all in all in our reconciliation, not only the maker, but the matter of it, our Priest, our sacrifice, our altar, our all. God was in Christ, as in his mercy-seat, reconciling the world unto himself. God hath set him forth to be so God, the party offended, in the counsels of his love from eternity, appointed, anointed him to it, qualified him for it, and has exhibited him to a guilty world as their propitiation.

By faith in his blood we become interested in this propitiation. Faith is the applying of this plaster to the wounded soul. Faith hath special regard to the blood of Christ, as that which made the atonement, for such was the Divine appointment, that without blood there should be no remission, and no blood but his would do it

effectually. All who by faith are interested in this propitiation receive remission of their sins through Christ. Christ was set forth to be a propitiation in order to remission, through the bearing of God. Divine propitiation kept us out of hell, that we have space to repent, it is owing to that a sinner is spared for life on this side hell.

God in all this declares his righteousness 1 In the propitiation itself. Was there such a demonstration of the justice and holiness of God, as there was in the death of Christ. It appears that he hates sin, when nothing less than the blood of Christ would satisfy for it. Finding sin, though but imputed, upon his own Son he did not spare him because he had made himself sin for us, 2 Cor 5:21. The iniquities of us all being laid upon him though he was the Son of his love, yet it pleased the Lord to trust him Isa 53:10. 2 In the pardon upon that propitiation that he might be just and the justifier of him that believeth. Mercy and truth are so mingled together righteousness and peace have so kissed each other Ps 85:10, that it is now become not only an act of grace and mercy but an act of righteousness, in God to pardon the sins of believers having accepted the satisfaction that Christ by dying made to his justice for them. It would not agree with his justice to demand the debt when the Surety has paid it and he has accepted that payment in full satisfaction. See 1 John 1:9. He is just, faithful to his word.

19-20 The apostle uses the word law in various meanings but the context shows how it is to be understood and common sense will usually discern this better than critical learning. It is evident he means the sacred scriptures in general by 'whatsoever the law saith' for the quotations are from the Old Testament in general, not the law given by Moses only. When he speaks of the Jews as under the law' he evidently means the whole legal dispensation by which they were distinguished from the Gentiles. But when he says 'by the law is the knowledge of sin' he must be understood of the moral law especially the extent, spirituality and excellence of which shows what things are sinful and how evil all sin is. The ceremonial law rather gave the knowledge of salvation by prefiguring the shedding of that atoning blood and the communication of that sanctifying grace by which sin is taken away.—T. Scott See note ch 2:12

—The knowledge of sin being chiefly by the moral law, shows that the apostle excludes that, as well as the ceremonial law, from

It is evident that the antithesis is not between moral and ceremonial, but between works in general and mercy. It is not so much as having the sense of sacrifice. It implies the making of a sacrifice, thereby effecting a reconciliation with the Deity.—*Fulpy.*

be-31. Justice in a governor requires that every man be dealt with according to his real character and actions, not as some expedient can be adopted, whereby justice and authority can be maintained, while mercy is exercised towards those who deserve punishment. It is for God's glory; for boasting is thus excluded, ver. 27. God will have the great work of the justification and salvation of sinners carried on from first to last, in such a way as might exclude boasting, 1 Cor. 1. 29-31. Now if justification were by the works of the law, boasting would not be excluded. If we were saved by our own works, we might put the crown upon our own heads. But the law of faith, the way of justification by faith, for faith excludes boasting; for faith is a depending, self-emptying, self-denying grace, and casts every crown before the throne: therefore it is most for God's glory, that we should thus be justified.

Observe, it speaks of the law of faith. Believers are not left lawless; faith is a law, it is a working grace, wherever it is in truth; and yet, because it acts in a strict and close dependence upon Jesus Christ, it excludes boasting. Not by a remedial law, as some call it, which in fact is a law of works and introduces boasting; but by justifying believers entirely by the grace of God, through the righteousness and redemption of Christ, without any respect to their works, by faith alone, of his gift and operation. By faith not considered in this matter as an act of obedience, or a good work, or as the principle of subsequent obedience, but as forming the relation between Christ and the sinner, which renders it proper that the believer should be pardoned and justified for the sake of the Saviour, and that the unbeliever who is not thus united or related to him, should remain under condemnation.

From all this the apostle draws the conclusion, ver. 28, That a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the

law. In the close of the chapter St. Paul shows the extent of this privilege of justification by faith, and that it is not the peculiar privilege of the Jews, but pertains to the gentiles also. 1. He asserts and proves it; ver. 29, 30. Is he the God of the Jews only? Can it be imagined that a God of infinite love and mercy should limit and confine his favours to that perverse people, the Jews, leaving all the rest of the children of men in a condition eternally desperate? 2. He obviates an objection, ver. 31. "No," says he, "though we do say that the law will not justify us, yet we do not therefore say that it was given in vain, or is of no use to us. We establish the right use of the law, and secure its standing, by fixing it on the right basis. The law is still of use to convince us of what is past, and to direct us for the future. Though we cannot be saved by it as a covenant, yet we own it, and submit to it, as a rule in the hand of the Mediator, subordinate to the law of grace; and thus we are so far from overthrowing, that we establish the law."

He that inquires seriously into the disposition of his heart, and the tenour of his past life, must perceive, that by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified before God. He therefore who is wise pleads guilty at the mercy-seat, and seeks that righteousness of God by faith in Christ Jesus, which is unto all, and upon all that believe, without any difference, for every one that comes in God's appointed and manifested way, shall be justified freely by his grace, through the redemption of his Son. Thus the believer's happiness is secured, boasting is excluded, despair is put away, and the Lord is shown to be the God of all nations. And the doctrine of faith alone establishes the law in its real honour, and the most complete manner; it lays the true foundation for holy obedience.

All have the same want of redeeming mercy, and if any think they have no need of Christ, or his atonement, and righteousness, on account of any attainments of their own, they greatly mistake, desert the fundamental principles of their religion, and are, in fact unbelievers. Let good works have their due honour and estimation, form the character, and appear eminently in the

life of every disciple of Christ; but not be the foundation of his hope, as if they would bear the trial in the day of judgment. St. Paul tells us over and over again, what advantage sincere faith gives for holiness, and urges the believer to abound in all the blessed fruits and effects of it, but not as if any works or holiness of our own could concur or co-operate to our justification, either in whole or in part, with the finished work of Christ.—(71.)

30. The words here rendered "by faith," and "through faith" have the same signification.

CHAPTER IV.

The doctrine of justification by faith, as pertaining to the gentiles as well as jews, is further illustrated by the case of Abraham, whose faith was imputed to him for righteousness before he was circumcised, 1-12. He received the promise for himself and his seed, through the righteousness of faith, 13-22. And we are justified in the same way of believing, as he was, ver. 23-25.

Ver. 1-8. The apostle here proceeds to encounter two prejudices which existed in the mind of the jews; one founded on their notions of the merit of circumcision, as entitling them to the favour of God; the other, founded on their birth-right, as the children of Abraham, and heirs of the promise made to him. To meet the former, he refers to Abraham, the father of circumcision; to meet the latter, he examines the ground of the covenant made with Abraham and his seed.—(75.)

The apostle first refers to the example of Abraham, in whom the jews gloried as their most renowned forefather, and most eminent for his holiness. If any had been justified by works, he might be supposed of the number. He inquires what Abraham had found or obtained, who was their father as a nation, though few of them were his children as believers. But however distinguished in various respects, he had nothing to boast in the presence of God, being saved by grace, through faith, even as others. Without noticing the years which passed before his call, and the failures at times in his obedience, and even in his faith, it was expressly stated in scripture that "he believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness," Gen. 15, 6,

All the world is seeking the most are wearying to very vanity, none can be to have found, but those justified before God. What found as pertaining to the external privileges and p Was he justified by them? merit of his works that re him to God's acceptance? means; which he proves by arguments. The promise of God, ffections engaged to perform it, and the promised Seed through whom the blessings were bestowed, formed the object of Abraham's faith. This, being proved genuine and lively by its fruits, showed his interest in the righteousness of the Messiah, and therefore it was imputed to him as if he had personally satisfied Divine justice, and answered all the demands of God's holy law. From this example the apostle observed, that if any man could work the full measure required by the law, the reward might be reckoned as a debt, due to him by terms of the covenant, which evidence was not the case even of Abraham. seeing faith was imputed to him for righteousness. This is the general case with believers. For this man, though he conscientiously performs his duties, yet works not, inasmuch as he works not with the expectation of obtaining righteousness in that way, which he knows to be absolutely impossible. Conscious that he cannot thus obtain the reward, he comes as a sinner to believe in Christ, and his faith is counted to him as a perfect righteousness; not on account of its excellency as a good work, but as it refers the sovereign Judge to the accepted righteousness and atonement of his Son. According to the law, he comes for the blessing as ungodly: God makes no account of anything in justifying him, except his faith, as forming his relation to Christ, and the man has no respect to anything else himself, in his expectation of that blessing. Nay, the justified believer, whatever his holiness and diligence may be, still comes before God, feeling that he is a sinner deserving wrath, from which he cannot be delivered except by an interest in Christ. He depends on the righteousness of God by faith in Christ, as his only hope; and the sincerity of his faith is evidenced by his good works.

"ungodly" here relates, man continues to be after sin, but to what he was, and to be, before it. For mainly, it does not reign in sin being justified alters his character, as it did Abraham's, the apostle here points to. He is no longer counted ungodly, but righteous, because of the non-imputation of sin, and the imputation of the righteousness of Christ to him. For it is not said his faith is his righteousness, but it is so imputed, as to be unto him obtaining a justifying righteousness, though not by his own works.—(82.)

This is further illustrated by a passage out of the Psalms, where David speaks of the remission of sins, as constituting the happiness and blessedness of a man; pronouncing him blessed, not that has no sin, or none which deserves death, for then, while man is so sinful and God so righteous, where could be the blessed man? but the man whom the Lord imputeth not sin. It is from Ps. 32. 1, 2. Observe, 1. The nature of forgiveness. It is the remission of a debt or of a crime; it is the covering of sin, as a filthy thing, as the shame of the soul. 2. The blessedness of this; blessed are they. Pardon is the only blessed people. The sentiments of the world are, those are happy who have power and possessions; but the sentence of the word is, those are happy, who have their debts to God discharged. How much is it our interest to make it sure to ourselves that our sins are pardoned! For that is the foundation of all other benefits. Not that forgiveness of sins is equivalent to justification, for this evidently implies the treating of a man as righteous, and as entitled to reward. But God always imputes righteousness where he does not impute sin, for none are pardoned except in virtue of their relation to Christ by faith, and if his atoning blood covers their sins, his righteousness also justifies their persons. As their Surety he suffered for their sins which were imputed to him; they are rewarded, and they inherit eternal life, because his righteousness is imputed to them.

No mere man since the fall could find any thing but death by his own works; and the scripture history, and the hearts even of the best of men,

evidence that all who have escaped condemnation have been saved by their faith being imputed to them for righteousness. The scripture uniformly teaches that the reward is not assigned to man for working, as a debt; but through belief, as of grace. Man's happiness consists in God's favour; that can only belong to the pardoned sinner; and the forgiveness of sin and the imputation of righteousness without works, are entirely through the obedience unto death of our righteous Redeemer. Yet at the same time none of these will neglect working, to glorify God, to do good, and to make their calling and election sure. Those who obtain this blessedness are happy, though poor, afflicted, and despised; all who come short of it are most miserable, however wealthy, honoured, and prospered.

1. "What then shall we say that Abraham, our ancestor, obtained (for justification) as to (any advantage from) the works of the flesh?" —*Bloomfield.*

"It was a common opinion and saying among the Jews, 'that Abraham performed all the law to a tittle,' and consequently that he was justified by that performance. The apostle shows that Abraham believed, and was justified by his faith, before he received circumcision, in which they placed so much of justification." —*Lightfoot.*

8. It is common in scripture to put the act for the object, especially with regard to faith and hope.—And that this is the sense in which we are to understand the apostle when he says here, and ver. 5, that Abraham's believing, and his faith were counted for righteousness, appears from its being opposed to our works; and from the reward being reckoned of grace and not of debt. Whereas the act of faith itself is as much a work as any other duty commanded in the moral law, and were that to be reckoned to us for righteousness, the reward in justifying us would be a debt, due to us on account of our having performed that work, as a servant's wages are for having done his master's business. We find Abraham's faith had reference to Christ the promised Seed, and to what should be done by him, that all nations might be blessed in him. What is here called faith's being imputed or counted for righteousness, is in the next chapter, ver 9—11. 18, 19, called being justified by Christ's blood, and reconciled to God by the death of his Son, by whom we have received the atonement, and the righteousness of Christ coming upon us unto justification, and our being made or constituted righteous by his obedience.—The typical sacrifices were spoken of as accepted for, or imputed to the offerers to make atonement for them, or not, according as they were, or were not presented to God, in the way of his appointment, Lev. 1. 4: 7. 18; 22. 25.—*Guyse.*

Ver. 9.—12. The Jews not only supposed that righteousness was by works, but that the privileges of God's people

were inseparably connected with circumcision. The apostle here inquires, when Abraham's faith was reckoned to him for righteousness. It clearly appeared from the scriptures before cited, that he was justified several years before his circumcision; the former having been some time before Ishmael's birth, the other when that son was thirteen years old. It was, therefore, manifest that circumcision was not necessary in order to justification.

For Abraham being thus justified upon his first believing, it is plain that his being circumcised many years afterwards was not the cause, or reason of his justification. It was a sign of the original corruption of human nature and of the inward circumcision of the heart, and of the gracious and visible distinction God made of Abraham and his seed from all other nations, and of his being brought with his offspring into the bond of the covenant. And it was such a sign as was also an outward instituted seal, not only for the confirmation of God's promises to him and to his seed, and of their obligation to be the Lord's, but likewise to assure him of his being already a real partaker of the righteousness of faith, which was imputed to him while he was in the uncircumcised state of a gentile. And this was ordered that he, as an eminent believer, with whom God's covenant was made expressly for himself and his seed, might be a noble pattern of faith, and of justification in a way of believing; and that he, as the father of the faithful, in whom and in whose seed all nations were to be blessed, might be the means of conveying spiritual benefits to all, who should afterwards, following his example, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, though uncircumcised gentiles; that the righteousness of Christ might also be theirs, by gracious imputation through faith, as it was to him while he remained uncircumcised.—(82.)

Thus Abraham was not merely the natural forefather of the nation of Israel, but the spiritual forefather of all believers who walked after the example of his obedient faith. The seal of the Holy Spirit in our sanctification is the inward evidence of the righteousness of faith. When the old nature is crucified, and the heart is circumcised to love God, it is evident that we are true

children of Abraham, and steps. Those were most forward to call Abraham father of his children. Thus the reason to call Christ Father, bear his name in outward, but that tread in his steps.

11. The meaning of this verse is, received the sign of circumcision as a token of his justification by faith in a cleansed state, and this was thus solemn, that he might be a spiritual father, the eminent pattern or example to gentiles who would also be gratuitously justified in an uncircumcised state.—Stewart.

Ver. 13-17. The former observation was against those who confined justification to the circumcision, this, ver. 13-16, to those that expected it by the law. But the promise was made to Abraham long before the law. It points at Christ, the Seed here mentioned, Gal. 3. 16. Christ is the heir of the world, all the ends of the earth are his possession, and it is in him that Abraham was. And it refers to that promise, Gen. 3. In thee shall all families of the earth be blessed. This distinction was given to Abraham through the law, for that was not given till long after, nor to his posterity as under the law, for many of them were shut out from it, for their sins. But it was given to him, through the righteousness of faith, and they were the true seed who were partakers of that same distinction. For if those only were heirs who were under the dispensation of the law, their faith would be made ineffectual, though the like faith was the immediate cause of Abraham's justification, and the promise would be of no benefit. For the law worketh wrath, by showing that every transgressor is exposed to the Divine indignation, and the clearer the law is, the more numerous and aggravated our transgressions appear. If a man could be without any law, no transgression could be charged upon him; but this cannot be the case with any man, so all are liable to condemnation, till they flee to Christ. As God intended to give men a title to the promised blessings, so he appointed it to be by faith that it might be wholly of grace, to ensure it to all who were of the like precious faith with Abraham, whether jews or gentiles, in all ages.

This accorded with the promise that

duct, should be the father of many
 first, an immense multitude, not
 only those descended from him,
 but all who have been, now are,
 or to be, shall be interested in the
 apostle's inference on him. This was
 they had before God, or in his ac-
 count, the relation of the whole
 family of Abraham; for He not only
 raised the dead in sin, and so could
 multiply children to Abraham from na-
 tion dead in their idolatry and iniquity;
 He calleth those things which
 are not, as though they were. Thus He
 had all the multitude of future be-
 lievers as present before himself, when
 He made the promise to Abraham, and
 considered him as the father, and them
 as the family, to whom the inheritance of
 the blessing was insured through faith.

The justification and salvation of
 sinners, the espousing of the gentiles
 that had not been a people, were a gra-
 tious calling of things which are not
 as though they were, thus giving being to
 things that were not. This expresses
 the sovereignty of God, and his abso-
 lute power and dominion; a mighty
 aid to faith, when all other supports
 sink and totter. The more holy and
 perfect the law, the greater wrath would
 have come upon us; but as all is of
 grace, it is through faith, and the pro-
 mised blessing is ensured to all the
 chosen seed, wherover dispersed, or
 however distinguished.

13 Some think that to be heir of the world,
 here, is to be heir of the land of Canaan. Others
 think, that it is to be the heir of the spiritual
 and heavenly Canaan. But the promise here
 meant, from the whole tenour of the apostle's
 argument, is a spiritual promise. In Gen. 17,
 there are temporal blessings annexed to, and
 distinct from this promise of spiritual good
 things.—*Fulpy.*

Ver. 18—22. The nature and power
 of Abraham's faith are here shown.
 He believed God's testimony, and ex-
 pected the performance of his promise
 when the case seemed hopeless. He
 believed he should become the father
 of many nations, naturally in his pos-
 terity, spiritually through Christ, who
 was to descend from him, though he
 was tried by long delays, and dis-
 couraged by difficulties apparently insur-
 mountable. He did not hesitate con-
 sidering to expect that God's word
 justified, he fulfilled; he gave glory to
 1. We have a full assurance that He was

able to perform what He had promised,
 and therefore his faith was imputed
 to him for righteousness. And it is
 to be observed in particular that his
 faith was against hope, against the
 surmises and suggestions of his un-
 belief. He had just before been con-
 cluding that he should go childless,
 that one born in his house was his heir,
 Gen. 15. 2, 3; which unbelief was a foil
 to his faith, and shows it to be a believing
 against hope. His faith passed by all con-
 sideration of circumstances, and thought
 of nothing but the faithfulness of the
 promise, and this kept up his faith.

Being not weak in faith, he considered
 not. It is mere weakness of faith, that
 makes a man be poring on the difficul-
 ties and seeming impossibilities which
 may be in the way of a promise. Though
 it may seem to be the wisdom and the
 policy of carnal reason, yet it is the
 weakness of faith, to look into all the
 difficulties that arise against the pro-
 mise. Abraham staggered not, because
 he considered not the frowns and dis-
 couragements of second causes; did not
 hesitate or stumble at them, but by a re-
 solute and peremptory act of his soul,
 with holy boldness, ventured all upon
 the promise. He took it not for a point
 that would admit of argument or de-
 bate, did not at all hang in suspense
 about it. Unbelief is at the bottom of
 all our staggerings at God's promises.
 It is not the promise that fails, but our
 faith that fails when we stagger. He
 was strong in faith, he was strength-
 ened in faith, his faith got ground by
 exercise. The strength of his faith
 appeared in its victory over his fears.
 And hereby he gave glory to God; for
 as unbelief dishonours God, by making
 him a liar, 1 John 5. 10, so faith honours
 God, by setting to its seal, that he is
 true, John 3. 33. Abraham's faith gave
 God the glory of his wisdom, power,
 holiness, goodness, especially of his
 faithfulness, resting upon the word that
 he had spoken. Our Lord Jesus com-
 mended especially great faith, Matt.
 8. 10, and 15. 28. God gives honour to
 faith; great faith gives honour to God.

Abraham was fully persuaded that
 what God had promised he was able also
 to perform, and was carried on with the
 greatest confidence and assurance. It is
 a metaphor taken from ships that come
 into the harbour with full sail, Abraham

saw the storms of doubts and fears and temptations likely to rise against the promise; upon which many would have shrunk back, and waited for a smiling gale of sense and reason. But Abraham broke through all the difficulties, and came home an unspeakable gainer. Such was his full persuasion, and it was built on the omnipotence of God; He was able. Our waverings arise from our distrust of Divine power; to be strong in faith it is requisite to believe not only that God is faithful, but that he is able, who hath promised. And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness, ver. 22. Faith is a grace that of all others gives glory to God.

From the scripture before us we learn the nature of the belief which justified the father of the faithful. It evidently was not the mere conviction of the truth of any doctrine; though it is clear that the truth of several doctrines must have been acknowledged and firmly impressed upon the mind of Abraham, to enable him to exercise that faith. Neither was it bare assent to facts related to him, though several facts must have been credited by Abraham, upon the truth of God's word, before the faith in question could have been exercised. But it clearly was faith in God, as a promiser, as solemnly engaging and covenanting to bestow certain blessings upon Abraham; blessings which the patriarch understood to be of a heavenly nature, and for which he was content to be a stranger upon earth. Faith clearly is the instrument by which we receive the righteousness of God, the redemption which is by Christ, and that which is the instrument whereby we take or receive it, cannot be the thing itself, nor can it be the gift which is thereby taken and received.—(25.)

It is evident from the whole context, that Abraham's faith did not justify him by its own merit or value, but as interesting him in Christ; and observe, that hoping against hope is a reliance that God will fulfil his promises to believers, notwithstanding all difficulties and improbabilities; but for any to fancy that they are believers, and that they shall be saved, contrary to the evidence of their temper and lives, is gross presumption, whatever their outward profession may be,

Ver. 23—25. The history of Abraham, and of his justification, is recorded for the instruction of us, and for those especially to whom the gospel was then made known. They believed in that God who raised Christ from the dead, and who would fulfil his promises to the faithful. Their faith would be imputed for righteousness, even as that of Abraham had been. This faith was a relation between them and the Father, for as he had been delivered up to death, by man as a criminal, but by the Father as a sacrifice for the offences of his people, so he had been raised again for their justification. He was thereby perfectly justified from the charges against him, and the acceptance of his righteousness and redemption was thereby demonstrated. The suretyship of Christ being accepted, it was effectual for all represented by him, of which privilege every believer partakes. Upon the whole, it is very evident, that we are not justified by the merit of our works, but by dependence through faith upon Jesus Christ and his righteousness; which was the truth Paul in this, and the foregoing chapter had been fixing as the great spring and foundation of all our comfort.

This application to us, ver. 24, of all that had been said about Abraham's justification, if we likewise believe, with all our heart, in the same God, as having now actually raised our only Lord and Saviour from the dead, that we might be effectually blessed with all spiritual blessings in him, makes it evident that Abraham's faith for this purpose not only rested on the power of God for performing his promise, but likewise looked forward to the promised Messiah, and what was to be done by him. Otherwise how could this be an instance of God's justifying those who should believe under the gospel state; or how could there be any analogy between Abraham's faith and theirs? This plainly sets forth Christ in his death and resurrection, as our object of justifying faith.—(22.)

Not as though Christ's death had no part in our justification, see ch. 5. but because our justification, which began in his death, was perfected in his resurrection. Christ did merit for us our justification and salvation.

duces both the passion, but the efficacy thereof, with respect to his resurrection. By his death he paid our debt, in his resurrection he received our acquittance, when he was discharged, and together with him, rendered a fruitful discharge from the guilt and sting of all our sins. This one passage is an abridgement or summary of the whole gospel.—(84.)

2. We then copy the example of Abraham, and in the midst of perils and difficulties, feel assured that God is both able and willing to perform his promises to all who trust in him, and wait their accomplishment in patient obedience. Thus our faith will be imputed to us for righteousness, through Him who died for our offences, and rose again for our justification.

CHAPTER V.

The apostle having proved at large from the state of things before and under the law, (ch. 2. and 3.) and even before God made covenant with Abraham, (ch. 4.) that the justification of Jews and Gentiles is merely by grace, through faith in the righteousness of Christ, proceeds to set forth its happy fruits and effects in both, ver. 1-11. And then carries his argument back as far as the fall of Adam itself, which involved all mankind in sin and death, and rendered every one alike incapable of being justified in any other way, than through Jesus Christ, ver. 12-14. And thereupon he runs the parallel between the first and second covenant-head, but shows that the grace of God, through the righteousness of Christ, is more efficacious to bring justification and salvation to all his spiritual seed; than Adam's sin had been to entail final condemnation and misery upon all his natural seed, ver. 15-21.

Ver. 1-5. The precious benefits and privileges which flow from justification, should quicken us all to give diligence to make it sure to ourselves that we are justified, and then to take the comfort it renders to us, and to do the duty it calls for from us. The fruits of this tree of life are exceedingly precious. A most blessed change takes place in the sinner's state, when he becomes a true believer, however vile he has been. Being justified by faith he has peace with God.

1. We have peace with God, ver. 1. It

is sin that creates not only a strangeness, but an enmity between us and God; the holy righteous God cannot be at peace with a sinner, while under the guilt of sin. Justification takes away the guilt, and so makes way for peace. And such is the good-will of God to man, that, immediately upon removing that obstacle, the peace is made. By faith we lay hold on God's strength, and so are at peace, Isa. 27. 4, 5. There is more in this peace than barely cessation of enmity, there is friendship and loving kindness. And surely a man needs no more to make him happy than to have God his Friend! But this is through our Lord Jesus Christ; through him as the great Peace-maker, the Mediator between God and man. Adam, in innocency, had peace with God; there needed no such Mediator; but to guilty sinful man it is a very dreadful thing to think of God out of Christ; for he is our Peace, Eph. 2. 14, not only the Maker, but the Matter and Maintainer of our peace, Col. 1. 20.

2. We have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, ver. 2. Observe, the saints' happy state; it is a state of grace, God's loving-kindness to us, and our conformity to God. Now into this grace we have access, an introduction; which implies that we were not born in this state. We are by nature children of wrath, and the carnal mind is enmity against God; but we are brought into it. We could not have got into it of ourselves, but we have a leading by the hand: are led into it, as pardoned offenders. By whom we have access by faith; by Christ, as the Author and principal Agent; by faith, as the means of this access. Not by Christ, in consideration of any merit or desert of ours; but in consideration of our believing dependence upon him, and resignation of ourselves to him. Not only wherein we are, but wherein we stand: a posture that denotes discharge from guilt; not cast, as convicted criminals, not thrown to the ground, as abjects; also we must not lie down, as if we had already attained, but stand, as those that are pressing forward, stand, as servants attending on Christ our Master. The phrase denotes perseverance; we stand firm and safe, upheld by the power of God; stand, as men that keep their ground, not borne down by the power

Christ should die, is such a mystery, such an unprecedented instance of love, that it may well be the employment of eternity to adore and wonder at it!

Again, what idea had the apostle when he supposed the case of some one dying for a righteous man? Was it not the undergoing this suffering that the person intended to be benefited, might be released from it? Now it is plainly with a similar view that Christ is there declared to have "died for us, when we were yet sinners"—"without strength"—that is, in the state of our dreadful fall, stunned as it were, and lying in a helpless and perishing condition. But from what are believers in Christ released by his death? Not from bodily death; for that they all do and must endure, without any distinction, as to physical suffering, from the rest of mankind. The evil, shown to be so unspeakably tremendous, and from which the deliverance could be effected only in this astonishing manner, must therefore have been something different from natural death, and incomparably more dreadful. But there is no other greater evil, to which the argument can possibly be applied, except that which the apostle actually affirms, *sin*, and its penal consequence, *wrath*, that is, the punishment of sin, determined not by arbitrary dominion, but by the incorruptible and unerring justice of God.—(95.)

And if by Divine grace, they were thus brought to repent, and to believe in Christ, and thus were justified by the price of his blood shedding, and by faith in that atonement, much more through him who died for them and rose again would they be kept from falling again under the wrath of God, and perishing in sin. Could it be thought that He, who so loved them when enemies, as to die for them, would not save and uphold them by his power, when made friends? For if, when they were impenitent transgressors, and desperate enemies to God's law and grace, they were brought into a state of reconciliation and peace with God, by the death of his Son upon the cross, as the sacrifice for their sins; *much more* would they, being thus reconciled, be preserved by his life, by his power and grace, from falling under the power of sin and Satan, or departing finally from him. He that has done the greater, which is,

of enemies to make us friends, certainly do the less, which is to us when we are friends. He once and again, speaks of "much more." If that heart deep to lay the foundation doubt, build upon that foundation who did the greater for his sake, surely will do what is less for his and children; the living Lord will complete the purpose of his love, by saving all true believers to the uttermost, till his finished ransom on the cross shall end in their finished salvation, as presented faultless before his presence with exceeding joy.

Whatever means have been appointed by the wisdom and mercy of God, as fit and efficient to render this great deliverance compatible with the rectitude of his government, may be most properly and justly expressed by the payment of a debt or of a ransom price, and by the intervention of a power exercised by righteousness.—(95.)

And having such a pledge of complete salvation in the love of God through Christ, the apostle declares that believers not only rejoiced in the hope of heaven, and even in their tribulations for Christ's sake, but they gloried in God also, as their unchangeable friend and all-sufficient portion. And this was through our Lord Jesus Christ only. For according to the law they all were sinners and enemies, but by Christ they "now had received reconciliation." This refers to the whole of the peace between God and the sinner, through the mediation of Christ, not merely to the atonement which is the ground of it. They were confident the great Peace-maker who effected this reconciliation through his cross, would certainly preserve it. They gloried in him as their everlasting portion.

Thus they joy in God as their treasure and portion, the great object of their wishes, and supreme delight of their souls, through the Lord Jesus Christ, and possessing perfect reconciliation through his blood, their affections are drawn to God, and by a sweet force they are engaged to make full and free surrender of their hearts to Him. If these are some of the genuine fruits of the peace of God ruling in the heart, let none disparage the faith by which believers receive it

duce "this happy fulness, as being in Christ, good works, or as opposed to the law, till they can find, in all the Christian wisdom, a better or stronger motive, for inward apostle application than the love of God in they had union by our Lord Jesus Christ." (97.)

shows that the greek word here "without strength," answers to a "defect," which signifies "to fall or stumble." He thinks this sense is included,

2. "common case of all mankind, and as the apostle is about to discourse on the fall of man.

In reference to some who would take the word "ungodly," as rather meaning the gentiles, *Doddridge* says, "They are undoubtedly included, but it seems very inconsistent with the apostle's argument to confine it to them, I therefore all along explain such passages in the most extensive sense; and think nothing in the whole New Testament plainer, than that the gospel supposes every human creature to whom it is addressed, to be in a state of guilt and condemnation, and incapable of being accepted with God any otherwise than through the grace and mercy which it proclaims."

7. "For scarcely will one die for a righteous man, I say, scarcely; for perhaps for a good man it would even dare to die." *Scholfield* says, "I cannot propose any thing certain on this passage. He mentions another rendering of the 1st clause—'Perhaps indeed for a good man it would dare even to die: but God, &c.'—'Received the reconciliation.'—*Alcock* says, 'The original is similar to the word in the preceding verse, translated reconciled.'

J. P. Smith renders from *Michaelis*, ver. 6—(1), as follows:—"When we were still fallen, Christ at the destined time died for us as guilty persons. Scarcely would any one die for an innocent person, (though perhaps to die for a very good and benevolent person, some one might take up the hard resolution,) but God demonstrates his love towards us, in that, when we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. How much more then shall we now, after that we have been declared righteous on account of his blood, be, through him, saved and made free from punishment. For if, though we were still enemies, we have been reconciled to God through the death of his Son, how much more shall we, as being already reconciled, be saved through his life. And not that merely, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have received the reconciliation."

Ver. 12—14. The main design of what follows is plain. It is to exalt our views respecting the blessings Christ has procured for us, by comparing them with the evil consequences which followed upon the fall of our first ancestor, and by showing that the blessings in question, not only extend to the removal of these evils, but far beyond this, so that the grace of the gospel has not only abounded, but superabounded.—(97.)

At the same time that there is a resemblance in the two cases, so as to make Adam a type of Christ, there is great inequality in the amount of evil conveyed by the first Adam to his children, and the amount of good conveyed by Christ, the second Adam, to the spiritual children God has given him. In ver. 12—14, we have the scriptural account of the origin or introduction of moral evil among mankind, and their condemnation in consequence to death, "the wages of sin." Adam was treated as the representative of all his race. Whatever the presumptions and reasoning of man may urge against this appointment, we may rest assured that the righteous Governor of the universe would not have adopted it, had it not been holy, just, and good. The event was, that Adam sinned against the positive command of God. He revolted from his Maker, and went in search of greater good in forbidden objects. Human nature was so constituted, that all the children of Adam after his apostasy, should be born like himself in his fallen state, deriving from him a depraved and corrupted nature, and being the very same in the view of God as Adam when he fell. The fact is undeniable; evil does exist; as to man, he is without dispute "born and conceived in sin, and is by nature a child of wrath," of the wrath of the just and holy God, who assuredly would not be angry without a cause.—(25.)

By him sin entered. When God pronounced all very good, Gen. 1. 31, there was no sin in the world; when Adam ate forbidden fruit, sin entered. Sin had before entered the world of angels, when many of them revolted from their allegiance, and left their first estate; but it never entered into the world of mankind till Adam sinned. It entered as an enemy, to kill and to destroy; as a thief, to rob and despoil; then entered the guilt of Adam's sin imputed to his posterity, and a general corruption and depravedness of nature. Adam sinning and falling, the nature became guilty and corrupted, and is so derived. Thus in him all have sinned. And death is by sin: for death is the wages of sin. Sin, when it is finished, brings forth death. When sin came into the world, death came along with it. Then entered all that misery which is the

due desert of sin ; temporal, spiritual, eternal death. If Adam had not sinned, he had not died : so death passed, a sentence of death was passed, as upon a criminal ; it passed through all men, as an infectious disease passes through a town, so that none escape it. Without exception, death passes upon all.

In proof of our union with Adam, and our concern in his first transgression, it should be observed* that sin prevailed in the world for many ages before the giving of the law by Moses, but sin cannot be imputed where there is no law which is transgressed thereby. Yet death reigned in that long interval, not only over adults who had wilfully sinned, but also over multitudes of infants, which shows that they had fallen in Adam under condemnation. Death reigned. Death is spoken of as a mighty prince, and his monarchy the most absolute, universal, and lasting monarchy. None are exempted ; it is a monarchy that will survive all other earthly rule, authority, and power, for it is the last enemy, 1 Cor. 15. 26. And though we may believe that as infants die in Adam without their personal transgression, so they will be saved in Christ, without their personal exercise of faith in Him, yet the sufferings and death of infants in every age, form a decided proof of original sin, and that the sin of Adam extended to all his posterity. He was a figure or type of Him that was to come, as the Surety of a new covenant in behalf of all related to Him.

12. It is not said sins, but " sin," with emphasis, in the singular number, intimating that it was not any after-acts of Adam's sinning, but his first sin, while he stood in his public capacity, that invaded all his off-spring.—*Quay*. His view is that the death here spoken of, as coming upon the whole world of mankind, by the sin of the first man, is not to be confined, as some would fain have it, to temporal afflictions and mortality of the body, which falls vastly short of the manifest design of the apostle's argument. See also *Stuart*.

Ver. 15—19. Adam was the surety, or the representative of the whole human race, Christ is so only of that chosen remnant, which has been or shall be one with him by faith, ver. 15. Indeed all men are under a dispensation of mercy ; in consequence of Christ's undertaking, there is an infinite sufficiency in the atonement of Christ, and it is proposed so generally to sinners, as a common

salvation for all, so that the story for the fullest invitations, ^{scant} invitations, and no sinner without who sincerely desires they be benefit. If we then leave that righteous, and merciful God, secret things which belong to the whole passage will open to our view. Through one offence the many or multitude of all kind are exposed to eternal condemnation. But the infinite grace and of God, and the free gift of righteousness and salvation, is through Christ Jesus, as man, and yet the Lord from heaven has brought many, even the multitude of believers, into a far more safe and exalted state than that from which they fell in Adam. For this free gift did not place them anew in a state of probation, but fixed them in a state of justification, as Adam would have been placed, had he stood.

If by one offence of one man, death acquired dominion over the whole human race, much more would it who are interested in the gift of righteousness be preserved by the perfect obedience of their one Surety, Jesus Christ. Yet notwithstanding these differences, there is a striking similarity. As by the offence of one, sin and death prevailed to the condemnation of all men, so by the righteousness of One, grace entered and prevailed to the justification of all who are related to Christ by faith. As by the disobedience of one, who was a public character or representative of his posterity, many were made or constituted sinners, and dealt with accordingly, previously to the consideration of their personal transgressions, so by the perfect obedience of One, a public character, and the representative of his people, many, even the whole multitude of believers, are constituted righteous before God, and dealt with as such ; even previously to the consideration of their personal holiness and obedience, which spring from their spiritual union with Christ, as depravity does from man's natural union with Adam.

And it is a great proof of original sin, that little children, who were never guilty of actual transgression, are yet liable to very terrible diseases, casualties, and deaths ; which could by no means be reconciled with the justice

ductibility of sinfulness of God, if they were in his image, free with guilt. Thus, in the new law, the type and the antitype of Christ, high disobedience and con- for law, are opposite to obedience and application. Through the grace they had not by grace has abounded in fruitful through Christ; yet multitudes being by remain under the dominion of death, rather than to apply to the blessings of the reign of grace.

2. There is the fullest encouragement for every one who is willing to come to Christ for his salvation; he will in no wise cast out any humble suppliant. Let all then flee without delay to this righteousness, by faith in Christ, and let the thankful and confirmed believer frequently meditate on his privileges and prospects, contrasting his state in Adam with his happiness in Christ.

18. *Grace* would supply "sin entered," as in ver. 12, since the apostle here resumes the argument begun in that verse, rather than the words, "judgment came," which the translators here added, as standing in ver. 16.

19. In whatever sense we understand being sinners and made righteous, the apostle speaks of it as brought to pass, not by any final acts of our own, but by the disobedience of Adam and the obedience of Christ. Sin is the word "sinners" ever used in the sense of being made mortal or subject to death, and the apostle clearly distinguishes them in ver. 12. Sin is the cause, and death is the effect.—*Grace*.

—Obedience to the Divine will, a perfect holiness and virtue, is devoted here. That obedience characterised every particular of our Lord's moral conduct, was maintained by him unbroken, through a long course of un-pen-able humiliation and suffering, and was finally consummated in his cruel and shameful death.—See *J. J. Gurney*.

Ver. 20, 21. If there were so much power and efficacy in the sin of a man, who was of the earth, earthy, to condemn us; much more are there power and efficacy in the righteousness and grace of Christ, who is the Lord from heaven, to justify and save us. The one man that saves us, is Jesus Christ. We are, by Christ and his righteousness, entitled to and vested with more and greater privileges than we lost by the offence of Adam. The plaster is wider than the wound, and more healing than the wound is killing. In the last two verses, the apostle anticipates an objection. Wherefore then serveth the law? 1. The law entered, that the offence might abound. The moral law, by its perfection, showed that many thoughts,

tempers, words, and actions, were sinful, which otherwise had not been known to be so—thus it occasioned transgressions to be multiplied. Not to make sin to abound the more in itself, but to discover the abounding sinfulness of it. The glass discovers the spots, but does not cause them. When the commandment came into the world, sin revived; even as the letting in a clearer light into a room discovers the dust and filth which were there before, but were not seen. It was like the searching of a wound, which is necessary to the cure. That offence, the sin of Adam, the extending the guilt of it unto us, and the effect of the corruption in us, are the abounding of that offence which appeared upon the entrance of the law. 2. That grace might much more abound; that the terrors of the law might make gospel comforts the more sweet. Sin abounded among the Jews; and to those of them that were converted to the faith of Christ, did not grace much more abound in the remitting of so much guilt, and the subduing of so much corruption? The greater the strength of the enemy, the greater the honour of the Conqueror. This abounding of grace is illustrated, ver. 21. Sin reigned unto death, it was a cruel, bloody reign; but grace reigns to life, eternal life, and this through righteousness, righteousness imputed to us for justification, implanted in us for sanctification; and both by Jesus Christ our Lord, through the power and efficacy of Christ the great Prophet, Priest, and King of his church.

Grace reigning through righteousness, must relate to the righteousness of Christ, and not to any righteousness of our own; otherwise there would be no room for the objection which follows, ch. 6. 1. Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?—(82.)

Thus God the Holy Spirit has, by the blessed apostle, delivered to us a truth of great importance, full of consolation, and peculiarly suited to our need as sinners; that "being justified by faith, we have peace with God, through Jesus Christ our Lord." St. Paul, from the state of mankind, as fallen in Adam, under sentence of death, and always sinful, pleads for a remedy suited to the urgency of the case. It is altogether the grace of God, and the gift

of grace, the abundance of grace, and the gift of righteousness, by Jesus Christ, to the glory of God; wholly from his mercy, and to the utter exclusion of all other pretensions, human merit or qualifications, as co-operating to its fulness and perfection. Whatever attainments one man may have above another, every man is a sinner to God, stands condemned by the law, and needs a pardon. A justifying righteousness cannot possibly be made up of a mixture of sin and holiness. There can be no justification or title to an eternal reward without a pure and spotless righteousness; consider this, and know where to look for it, even to the righteousness of Christ, in whom grace abounds.—(71.)

And what an endearing enhancement of this free favour it is, that where sin has abounded, grace much more abounds by the gospel! And that as sin hath reigned unto death in all its terrors, relating to this world and the next, so grace reigns with uncontrollable sovereignty and power, and with the brightest glory, to eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord! May we be humbled under a sense of our guilt and ruin by Adam's fall! and be thankful for the door of hope which is opened in Christ and his righteousness!—(82.)

20 "Came in by way of addition." It super-vened upon the state which preceded Moses, when men were living without a revelation.—*Stewart*

— "Entered incidentally."—*Schleusfeldt*. He considers the sense to be, "that when sin had entered, the direct and obvious method would have been to introduce the gospel as its great counteraction and remedy; instead of which the law came first to answer a collateral end, to aggravate the evil and make it more manifest and desperate, that men might be more effectually prepared to welcome the blessing. Thus it was an *indirect* step towards the accomplishment of God's ultimate purpose."

CHAPTER VI.

The apostle, having established the doctrine of justification by the free grace of God, through the righteousness of Christ, guards against a licentious abuse of it, by showing the necessity of believers dying to sin, and living to God; because they are dead to the law, ver. 1, 2. Because they are obliged to all holiness by their christian baptism, and union with Christ, ver. 3—10. Because they are made alive to God, ver. 11—15, and are freed from the

dominion of sin, ver. 16—22. Because the cause of the contrary fruits of sin and holiness, one of which is the other everlasting life, ver. 23—27.

Ver. 1, 2. The apostle says, "What shall we say then? Shall we make made of the doctrine of grace which he had stated? say, If then we are justified by the imputation of Christ's righteousness, and the efficacy of his satisfaction through faith alone, are not men free from all moral obligation, to work wickedness? Shall we do evil that good may come? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? Shall we from hence take encouragement to sin with the more boldness? Is this a use to be made of it? No, it is an abuse, and the apostle startles at the thought! God forbid; far be it from us to think such a thought. Opinions that give any countenance to sin, or open a door to practical immoralities, how specious and plausible soever they may be considered, by the pretence of their advancing free grace, are to be rejected with the greatest abhorrence; for the truth is, in Jesus, is a truth according to godliness, Tit. 1. 1. The apostle is very full in pressing the necessity of holiness, in this chapter. He does not keep out of sight, nor explain away the free grace of the gospel, but while he states his doctrine in the most explicit language, he shows also the inseparable connexion between justification and sanctification. Let the thought be abhorred, of continuing in sin that grace may abound. The unbeliever has no part in that grace; and as the believer is dead to sin, how shall he live any longer in the practice of it. Love and gratitude to the Saviour, unite with humbling and alarming convictions, causing hatred of sin, mortifying the affections, making them dead to its pleasures and interests, and causing him to separate from iniquity, as a dead man ceases from all the actions of life. Not only ought this to be the believer's character, but it is so. The benefits of justification and sanctification are connected by a perpetual bond, each flows from Christ, by the gift of God.

True believers are dead unto sin, therefore they ought not to follow it. These things are evidently proved by

die, can be both dead and alive at the same time be both dead and alive. For even as he is a fool who desires health, so that he or would be sick also; or would be in the fire, that he might be in burning; so also is he a sinful man desiring to be dead unto sin, and yet live in it. Wherefore, when we are born again to Christ, it is necessary we should die unto sin.—(58.)

2. *Macknight* and some others would render "dead by sin." *Stade* says, To this may be objected that true christians alone are here addressed, "as many of us as are dead," or, "we being such as are dead," whereas all mankind are dead by sin.

Ver. 3. 4. Christ is a Head which has its body, and each believer is a member. The apostle says, 1 Cor. 12. 13, By one Spirit are we all baptized into one body. By one Spirit, and by the faith, which under his influence we exert, we are truly united to Christ, as by the outward ordinance we are admitted into his visible body, the church. To be by one Spirit truly united to Christ, was not likely to be the case of every one outwardly baptized. This perhaps is the reason for the expression "as many." Though the apostle commonly addresses the churches as true believers, yet there frequently is the hint of exceptions. But so many as are truly united to Christ, and to whom this grace is sealed by baptism, they are baptized into Christ's death.—(81.)

And the apostle emphatically shows, ver. 3. 4. that all who had been baptized into the name and religion of Jesus, had received the sign, and made the profession of communion with him, and conformity to him in his death; that in virtue of his dying for their sins, they should die to all sin, and have done with all their unholy pursuits and connections. This profession was equivalent to being buried with Christ, as dead with him. For as his burial was a manifestation that he was really dead, and was followed by his immediate resurrection, so baptism was a professed manifestation of death to sin, and all carnal pursuits and affections, and led to walking in newness of life, not only as to outward actions, but with respect to inward principles.

Every true believer abhors the thought of perverting the gospel, How

can he, in whose heart the principles which gave rise to his former sinful courses are mortified, continue in practices which he loathes and dreads. Baptism teaches us the necessity of dying to sin, and being as it were buried from all ungodly and unholy pursuits, and of rising to walk with God in newness of life. Unholy professors believe and renounce their baptism. They may have had the outward sign of a death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness, but never passed from the family of Satan to that of God.

4. Christians being buried, and rising with christian baptism, see Col. 2. 12, is not ascribed to baptismal engagements to die unto sin, and to live unto righteousness: but to their faith, by which the ordinance is made effectual to its proper purpose, and by which christians perceive the comfortable matters it is designed to represent, and seal unto them.—*Fraser*.

— By the powerful and glorious energy of the Father.—*Vulpy*.

Ver. 5—10. The apostle compares Christ, who died and was buried, and rose again from the dead, to a plant, which, being covered in the earth, springs up in due time. And then, because he had said that we are dead to sin, and buried with Christ, that we might rise again unto righteousness; to intimate that these things take place by the grace we derive from Christ, he says, that we have grown together with him into one plant; as the things planted together with a tree, grow together with it, and live by the same sap.—(58.)

Sinful men become one with Christ by the Holy Spirit, whose work it is to mortify sin, and to renew the soul to holiness, in conformity to the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And by motives and grace derived from him, a man will habitually live a holy life, according to a new rule, and for new ends and purposes. So that the corrupt nature, called the old man, because derived from our first father Adam, and as comprising a complete system of unholy dispositions and affections, in every true believer is crucified with Christ, by the grace derived from the cross. It is deprived of dominion, treated as an enemy, its destruction is determined, and actually begun; it is weakened, confined, and in a dying state, though it yet lives and struggles for life, and even for liberty and victory. Nor is there a desire in the believer, or

any intention in his Lord to release the crucified rebel; die he must, though in a lingering manner. The whole body of sin, whatever is not conformed to the holy law of God, must be done away, so that the believer may no more be the slave of sin, but delivered from its harassing motions.

He that is dead to the love and practice of sin, is freed for ever from its yoke; he has passed into the service of another master. He that is dead has been justified from sin, he alone who is dead to sin has been justified from the guilt of it, his death to sin is the proof of his being accounted righteous. Thus the death of Christ is the real ground of our belief, that we shall for ever live with him in heaven. None must expect heavenly glory unless this inward change take place in him, when, by faith in a crucified Saviour, he becomes dead, even to the once most beloved sinful pleasure. Then his interest in the righteousness of his Surety is clear, Christ never would have been subject to death, had it not been on account of our sins, imputed to him as our Surety, to expiate which he died unto sin once, as an atoning sacrifice for the sins of men. And, having accomplished that gracious design, he rose again and lives, one with the Father, carrying on and perfecting his mediatorial work. In like manner we die unto sin, are delivered from its dominion, and rise to a new life, to fall no more under that bondage, but henceforth to live to God and find happiness in his service.

6 In but one place in scripture, Eph. 2. 15, "the new man" signifies the gospel church, consisting of jews and gentiles. It is unreasonable so to understand the new man in other places, where the scope and the description and character added, require a different meaning to be understood. It is also to be observed, that the apostle never uses "the old man," to signify the christian's previous state of heathenism—*Fraser*.

— "Destroyed" The particular import of this word is, to make void, debilitate, enervate, disannul, abolish, or depose. The body of sin in believers is indeed an enfeebled, conquered, and deposed tyrant, and the stroke of death finishes its destruction.—*Doddridge*.

Ver. 11—15. The preceding verses declare the character and experience of real christians. The apostle, in ver. 11, proceeds to exhort professed christians to manifest their sincerity by their conduct; and believers to live up to their privi-

leges, in consistency with profession. Let them be dead to sin, resolutely its allurements, and consider as living through the Christ Jesus. Christ is life. There can be no interval between sinful souls and a heaven by the mediation of the Lord. Through Christ, as the author and maintainer of this life; through Christ, as the head from whom we receive vital influence; through Christ, as the Father, by which we derive sap and nourishment, and so live. In living to God, Christ is all in all. By living our life in the flesh to God, with his honour and glory as our end, by his word and will as our rule; in all our ways acknowledging him, and having our eyes ever toward him; that is to live unto God.

In these verses the apostle suggests the strongest motives against sin, and to enforce holiness. Being made free from the reign of sin, alive unto God, and having the prospect of eternal life, which saints are to enjoy in the perfection of holiness, it becomes them to be greatly concerned to advance thereto. The christian, made free, is in a condition to resist the reign of sin, and to refuse obedience to it, which he was not in formerly. If sin now reigns, or prevails in believers, it must be owing to their own indolence, unwatchfulness, faulty weakness, or treachery. However, as unholy lusts within are not quite rooted out in this life, it must be the care of the christian to resist their motions, carefully and seasonably, earnestly endeavouring that, through Divine grace, they do not take effect or prevail, in this mortal state. Let the consideration of this, as a state that will soon be at an end, encourage the true christian, with respect to those lusts, the motions of which so often perplex and distress him. Not one will survive this mortal state for a moment. Therefore as the time of warfare and conflict is short, believers, acquit yourselves against them as men, as Christ's freed men.—(81*f*.)

The apostle's exhortation, ver. 12. 13, implies that the christian now dead to sin, was in a capacity to avoid and resist it effectually, and to decline its service. But, made free as he was, he might, to his own hurt, in many instances, return to the service of sin,

duce by a master from whose service he is not to expect better than hurt and no advantage to ourselves; with the greatest mortification and undutifulness to Him or for whom Christ has made us free. Here the apostle declares, sin the one, and God the other; they had no man's members are unprofitable to one service or the other; and by his name is comprehended the various faculties, powers, passions, and affections of the soul, by the working of which, the mind, will, and affections have inward war, before the members of the body come to be employed. Surely by the working of these there is much unholiness and sin, even when the members of the body are not employed. How important then, to present our whole selves to God, in a constant and willing readiness for his service, as becomes those who by his wonderful grace are made free from the reign of sin, and become alive unto God. Let us then present all our powers to God, as weapons or tools ready for the warfare, and work of righteousness, in his service.—(81f)

For though, while the true believer continues in this mortal state, the corruption of nature will work and strive for the mastery in him, and may trouble and perplex, perhaps surprise and wound, yet it never can regain full consent, an allowed and uncontrolled power. For the believer is not under the law as a covenant of works, or its terrors and spirit of bondage, which condemns for every sin, yet affords no effectual assistance against it, or pardon of it. The believer is under the covenant of grace, which contains unchangeable promises and never-failing springs of strength, assistance, and preservation from apostasy, and generous filial motives to obedience, as well as free forgiveness of all disallowed sins, through the blood of Christ. He is under the dominion of the free favour and love of God, which reigns through righteousness unto eternal life, ch. 5. 21, and the government of that principle of grace, whereby he has put his new covenant fear into the heart, to keep down the dominion of sin, and prevent total departure from him.—(82)

There is strength in the covenant of grace for us, if we will but use it. Sin shall not have dominion. God's promises to us are more powerful and

effectual for the mortifying of sin, than our promises to God. Sin may struggle in a believer, and may create him a great deal of trouble, but it shall not have dominion; may vex him, but it shall not rule over him.

What then? shall any take occasion from this encouraging and important doctrine, to allow themselves in the practice of any sin, because they are under a covenant of grace, of God's free favour, that they may live under the power of the gracious principles he infuses into them? Far be such abominable thoughts, so directly contrary to the perfections of God, and the design of his gospel, and so inconsistent with our being under grace.—(82)

A carnal man, under the influence merely of some change of notions or flow of affections, may pervert the doctrine of perseverance as well as that of justification, but the true believer cannot. If betrayed for a moment, he must abhor himself and deeply repent of such ingratitude and perverseness. What can be a stronger motive to have nothing to do with sin than the love of Christ? Shall we sin against so much goodness, abuse such love?

13 The apostle, using the phrase of weapons, shows that there is a war in us; some light for sin, and make their members weapons and instruments thereof, but the children of God must fight and strive against sin, and hold up their weapons against the tyranny and dominion thereof, this combat between the spirit and the flesh, the faithful always find in themselves. See Gal. 5. 17.—*WVale*

Ver. 16—20. A person may do an occasional service for one to whom he is not a servant; but doubtless he is the servant of that master whom he regularly obeys, and to whose work he devotes his time and strength. The case is similar in spiritual matters, a man may profess to be a christian, and yet habitually serve sinful pursuits. But every man must be adjudged to be the servant of the master, to whose commands he yields himself—whether it be the sinful propensities of his heart, in actions which lead to death, or the new and spiritual obedience implanted by regeneration.

The apostle, however, rejoiced in the change which had taken place in those whom he addressed; they had been the willing and devoted slaves of sin, but now they had cordially obeyed the call

of the gospel, into which they were delivered, or into the very fashion of which they were cast, as melted metal receives and retains the form of the mould. As the same metal becomes a new vessel when melted and recast in another mould, so the believer has become a new creature. Being then, through obedience of the truth, which conveyed the knowledge of Christ, and of Divine grace through him, and through the faith thereof, under the powerful influence of the Holy Spirit, made free from the wretched thralldom of sin; they became the servants of righteousness, that is, the servants of God. They had the principles of righteousness prevailing in their hearts, in place of the vile principles of sin and unrighteousness which formerly reigned therein. The servant in those days was the entire property of his master, to be commanded and disposed as he pleased. The servant of God is so, not only by creation but by redemption. The servant of the Lord has freely and fully given himself up to the Lord to be his. But there is great difference in the liberty of mind and spirit, the confidence, consolation, and hope, so opposite to the state of slavery, which the true christian has in the service of his rightful Lord, whom he is enabled to consider as his Father, and himself as a son and heir, by the adoption of grace. To him his Master's will is the perfect law of liberty, James 1. 25.—(81.f.)

As therefore, before their conversion, they had yielded themselves to be the slaves of uncleanness and injustice, thus continually furthering the cause of wickedness and ungodliness, so now ought they to be wholly the devoted servants of righteousness; executing constantly the commands of God, the dictates of the Holy Spirit, and the motions of the new nature, that by progressive sanctification they might press forward to perfect holiness.

Righteousness unto holiness, intimates growth, and progress, and ground gained. As one sin makes the heart more disposed for another, so every gracious act confirms the gracious habit: serving righteousness is unto holiness; one duty fits us for another.

The willing slaves of sin perform no service to righteousness; they are not influenced by regard to the glory of God in any of their actions; but uniformly

gratify their own unholy selfish motives, and seek so doing. They are free from sin, not servants thereof, spoken after the manner of a similitude is used from the common among men, even to of services and subjections. any liberty given, but by a liberty which is licentiousness. Altogether void of that which is good, void of any good principles, motions, or inclinations; void of all subjection to the law and will of God, of all conformity to his image; and this ye then were pleased with, as a freedom and a liberty; but freedom from righteousness is the worst kind of slavery. The dominion of sin consists in willingly being slaves thereto, not in being harassed by it as a hated power, struggling for victory and dominion. Those who now are the servants of God, once were the slaves of sin, and those who now are slaves of sin, may become the servants of God through the gospel. We ought therefore diligently to use every means with those who are yet unchanged, in dependence on the Divine blessing to render them effectual, and when the change takes place, let us heartily thank God for it.

How merciful are all the repeated admonitions which warn us to flee from the dominion of sin! Let us all judge that we have already too long yielded ourselves servants thereto. Surely it is too much time that we have already spent, too much vigour that we have already exerted, in so base a servitude. For the future let us act as those that are made free from sin.—(80.)

16. To whom, or, to what?—*ἑρ—ἑρῶν.*

17. "But thanks to God, and although ye were the slaves of sin, yet ye have obeyed from the heart the mould of doctrine into which ye were delivered."—*Marknight.*

—*FRANCIS PARAPHRASES* thus, "I see cause of thankfulness to God, the author and true cause of the great effect; that whereas you had been the servants of sin, you have sincerely and heartily obeyed the doctrine of the gospel; into which, by the power and efficacy of a superior hand, as into a mould, ye were delivered over and cast."

20. To be free from righteousness is not mentioned as a privilege, but as the misery of their natural state: nor does it signify that they were discharged from obligations to righteousness, for these are immutable and eternal—but that they did not regard the bonds which lay upon them to be holy.—*Guyse.*

Ver. 21—23. What was the fruit pro-

duce, by the evil actions of which at last they were ashamed? They could not now that vexation, disgrace, remorse, and sorrow, always attended or followed their sinful indulgences. The apostle appeals to the Romans, whether they had not found the service of sin an unfruitful service. Did you ever get any thing by it? Cast up the account, reckon your gains; what fruit had ye then? Beside the future losses, which are infinitely great, the very present gains of sin are not worth mentioning. What fruit? Nothing that deserves the name of fruit; the present pleasure and profit of sin do not deserve to be called fruit; they are but chaff, ploughing iniquity, sowing vanity, and reaping the same. And it is an unbecoming service; that of which we are now ashamed. Shame came into the world with sin, and is still the certain product of it; either the shame of repentance, or, if not that, eternal shame and contempt. Who would wilfully do that which, sooner or later, he is sure to be ashamed of? Lastly, he argues from the end of all these things. Rational creatures are capable of looking forward, considering the latter end of things. To persuade us from sin to holiness, here are the blessing and the curse, good and evil, life and death, set before us; and we are put to our choice. The end of sin is death. The end of those things is death. Though the way may seem pleasant and inviting, yet the end is dismal; it will be bitterness in the latter end. From this condemnation the believer is set at liberty, when made free from sin. Thenceforth he has fruit unto holiness: the nature and effects of his conduct are holy.

The wages of sin is death. Death is as due to a sinner when he hath sinned, as wages are to a servant when he hath done his work. This is true of every sin; there is no sin in its own nature venial: death is the wages of the least sin; all that are servants of sin, and do the work of sin, must expect to be thus paid. If the fruit be unto holiness, if there is an active principle of true and growing grace, the end will be everlasting life; a very happy end! Though the way be up-hill, though it be narrow, thorny, and beset, yet everlasting life at the end of it is sure. The gift of God is eternal life. Heaven is life, consisting in the vision and enjoyment of God;

and it is eternal life; no infirmities attending it, no death to put a period to it. This is the gift of God. The death is the wages of sin, it comes by desert; but the life is a gift, it comes by favour. Sinners merit hell, but saints do not merit heaven; there is no proportion between the glory of heaven and our obedience; we must thank God, and not ourselves, if ever we get to heaven. And this gift is through Jesus Christ our Lord. It is Christ who purchased it, prepared it, prepares us for it, preserves us to it; he is the Alpha and Omega, the All in all in our salvation.

Wages and gifts are here opposed, one to the other; because, though death is the just reward of the service done for sin, yet eternal life is merely the unmerited gift of grace; without any worthiness in us to entitle us to it. The opposition in this and the preceding verses, between death and eternal life, shows that the death which is the fruit of sin, includes that which is eternal, as well as the temporal.—(82.)

Happy is he alone who is ashamed of past offences, and set at liberty from sin, and hates and dreads it. It is of the Lord's mercy that we have not all received, as well as deserved the wages of sin; but thanks be to God for the inestimable gift of his own Son to be our salvation, and of eternal life through him! May we all forego our boasts, and renounce our vain confidences; may we come as condemned criminals, not thinking to merit or earn the favour of God, which is life eternal, but to supplicate him, for Christ's sake, to bestow it on us as a free gift; that he may have all the glory, both now and for evermore!

What arguments, motives, or means of suasion can be more strong and powerful, when the prospect of eternal life, so clearly set forth in God's word and promises, and the terrors of eternal death, the just punishment of sin, so agreeable to the word of God and the dictates of conscience, do not prevail with sinful men to betake themselves to Christ by faith, to forsake then sins by true repentance, and to engage in the service of God? What a proof of the dominion sin has over them, and how absolutely it has subjected them to its service!—(81. f.)

23. The word rendered wages, was commonly meant of the pay of soldiers in previous or money. It signifies also the wages by which

gladiators were hired. As the gladiator for wages and provisions afforded him, gave himself up to butchery and destruction, for the amusement of the cruel and barbarous Roman rabble, so the sinner, for the present pleasures of sin, gives himself up to eternal destruction, whereby he gratifies the malice of devils. — *Fraser.*

CHAPTER VII.

The apostle shows that believers are not under the law as a covenant, but are united to Christ, that they may bring forth fruit unto God, as a further argument against sin, and for holiness, ver. 1-6. He sets forth the use and excellence of the law in other views of it, though it be not sufficient to remove the guilt, or master the power of sin, 7-13. And describes the spiritual conflicts between corruption and grace in a believer's heart, 14-25.

Ver. 1-6. The apostle had stated, "Sin shall not have dominion over you; for ye are not under the law, but under grace." He here confirms that proposition. This argument relates to the moral law, to which we stand in such a relation as the rule of our present conduct and future judgment, that none but He who formed the union can dissolve it. And unless we become dead to the law by the body of Christ, renouncing all expectations from it, that we may be united to Him who died for our sins, and rose again for our justification, we must abide under the dominion of sin, and the curse of the law for ever. So long as a man continues under the law as a covenant, and seeks justification by his own obedience, he continues the slave of sin in some form; because nothing but the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, can make any sinner free from the law of sin and death. But how is deliverance from the law an argument why sin should not reign over us, and why we should walk in newness of life?

1. We are delivered from that power of the law, which curses and condemns us for the sin committed by us. The sentence of the law is reversed, by the death of Christ, to all true believers. The law saith, The soul that sins shall die; but we are delivered from the law. The Lord has taken away thy sin, thou shalt not die. We are redeemed from the curse of the law, Gal. 3. 13.

2. We are delivered from that power of the law which irritates and provokes,

the sin that dwelleth in us. The law, by commanding, forbidding and punishing, corrupt and fallen man, brings no grace to cure and strengthen the soul, only stirs up the corruption. We stand this not of the law as a rule, but as a covenant of works.

The scope of verses 2-4, is, that, in point of profession and privilege, we are under a covenant of grace, and not under a covenant of works; under the gospel of Christ, and not under the law of Moses. The difference between a law-state and a gospel-state, is spoken of under the similitude of being married to a new husband. Our first marriage was to the law, which, according to the law of marriage, was to continue only during the life of the law. The law of marriage is obligatory only till the death of one of the parties, and no longer. The obligation of laws extends no further. The condemnation of laws extends no further. Thus, while we were alive to the law, we were under the power of it, before the gospel came with power into our hearts. The second marriage is to Christ. We are freed, by death, from our obligation to the law as a covenant, as the wife is from her obligation to her husband.

Ye are dead to the law, ver. 4, as the crucifying the world to us, and us to the world, amounts to the same; so the law dying, and our dying to it. Not the law itself, but its obligation to punishment, and its provocation to sin, that is dead, it has lost its power; and thus, by the body of Christ, that is, by the sufferings of Christ in his body, by his crucified body, which answered the demands of it, made satisfaction for our violation of it, purchased for us a covenant of grace, in which righteousness and strength are laid up for us, such as were not, nor could be, by the law. We are dead to the law by our union with Christ; in our believing powerfully and effectually, we are dead to the law, have no more to do with it than the dead servant, who is free from his master, hath to do with his master's yoke. The day of our believing is the day of espousals unto the Lord Jesus. We enter upon a life of dependence on him, and duty to him.

As our dying to sin and the law, is in conformity to the death of Christ, and the crucifying of his body, so our devotedness to Christ in newness of life,

is in conformity to the resurrection of Christ. Good works are the children of the new nature, the products of union with Christ; as the fruitfulness of the vine is the product of its union with its root. Whatever our professions and pretensions may be, there is no fruit brought forth to God, till we are united to Christ. It is in Christ Jesus that we are created unto good works, Eph. 2. 10. That fruit alone turns to a good account, which is brought forth in Christ. This distinguishes the good works of believers from the good works of hypocrites and self-justifiers, that they are done in union with Christ, in the name of the Lord Jesus, Col. 3. 17. This is, without controversy, one of the great mysteries of godliness. But when we were in the flesh, that is, in a carnal state, under the reigning power of sin and corruption, in the flesh, as in our element; then the motions of sins which were by the law, did work in our members. We were carried down the stream of sin, and the law was but as an imperfect dam, which made the stream to swell the higher, and rage the more; our desire was to sin, as that of the wife to her husband, and sin ruled over us: we loved it, devoted all to it, conversed daily with it, made it our care to please it. We were under a law of sin and death, as the wife under the law of marriage; and actual transgressions were produced by the original corruptions, such as deserve death.

That we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter, ver. 6. Being united to Christ, we must change our way. Still we must serve, but it is a service that is perfect freedom, whereas the service of sin was mere drudgery. We must now serve in newness of spirit, by new spiritual rules, from new spiritual principles, in the spirit, and in truth, John 4. 24. There must be a renovation of our spirits, wrought by the Spirit of God, and in that we must serve. Not in the oldness of the letter; we must not rest in mere external services, as the carnal Jews, who gloried in their adherence to the letter of the law, and minded not the spiritual part of worship, but we are delivered from that yoke, that we might serve God without fear, in holiness and righteousness, Luke 1. 74, 75. We are under the dispensation of the Spirit, therefore we must be spiritual, and serve in the spirit.

It is certain that as Christ is called the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world, his expiatory sufferings and death have had effect from the beginning of the world for remission of sin to all believers. In like manner his death has had effect for the sanctifying his people by his Spirit from the beginning. As it was the Spirit of Christ who spake by all the ancient prophets, 1 Pet. 1. 11, so did his Spirit then operate powerfully in the hearts of his people, to make them fruitful in holiness. Serving God in newness of spirit, and serving in the oldness of the letter, are here stated in opposition. The law, and the greatest efforts of one under the law, in the flesh, cannot set the heart right with regard to the love of God, overcome worldly lusts, or give truth and sincerity in the inward parts, or any thing that comes by the special sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit. While in the meanest soul united to Him that rose from the dead, there is, often with great disadvantage otherwise, a sincerity of holiness, as to inward principles, and uniform practice, that makes his righteousness to exceed any under the law.---(S. 1. 7)

Is it the desire of our souls to say with the psalmist, "Lord, what love have I to thy law?" Do we believe it to be the rule of our duty, and that it will be the measure of our reward or condemnation, that we are miserable by transgressing it, and never can be happy but in conforming to it? Learn then from the apostle the order, through the Holy Spirit, of coming to the love of it. We never can look upon it with affection till we see the sting of death taken out of it, never be in a fruit-bearing state according to it, nor delight in it as a rule, till freed from it as a covenant.

Sanctifying grace comes only by the new covenant, without which we fallen creatures must continue in the flesh; and our natural desires will work against the law, to bring forth fruit unto death, so that nothing more than a formal obedience to the outward letter of any precept, can be performed by us, without the renovating, new creating grace of the new covenant. When the apostle had been speaking of the dominion of sin, he had said so much of the influence of the law as a covenant upon that dominion, that it might easily be misinterpreted as a reflection upon the law: to

prevent which he shows from his own experience the great excellency and usefulness of the law, not as a covenant, but as a guide; and further discovers how sin took occasion by the commandment.

1. The particle in the last clause may be rendered "he" or "it," so that the last clause may be connected at once with both the antecedents; the law which represents the husband, or the person that has the place of the wife.—*Fraser*.

—On the principles which the law itself lays down, it ruleth over a man only ~~so~~ long as it liveth.—*Doddridge*. See also *Bloomfield*.

5. Most commonly "the flesh," used in a moral sense, signifies the corruption of nature, the evil principle of sin in man; or human nature as corrupted by sin. The word flesh may have been transferred to this use and meaning, from a view to the body, and the excitement it gives to various evil affections and lusts, which are accomplished and gratified by the body. The meaning of scripture words is to be determined by the scripture use especially, and there is in scripture mention of the flesh, in so large a sense, as to comprehend all sinful lusts and unholily affections whatever, see Gal. 5. 19—21. Thus, to be "in the flesh," signifies to be under the prevalent influence and power of that corrupt principle or depravation which the scripture means by the flesh. Being "in the Spirit," does not signify merely having a temper and disposition conformed to Christ, and suitable to the spirituality of the gospel. It imports to have the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead, dwelling in a man, as chap. 8. 10, 11, which does not dwell in any that are under the curse of the law; or in any but those he has brought into union with Christ, who are born of the Spirit, and so are renewed in the habitual and prevailing temper and disposition of their hearts. It is clear in the apostle's words, that it is by that Spirit, and by his operation and influence in men, that they come out of their carnal state, and from being in the flesh. Being "in the Spirit," and "having the Spirit of Christ," upon the one hand, and "being in the flesh," destitute of the Spirit, or the other, are the characters and states of men that are contra-distinguished. It is evident that to be "in the flesh," and destitute of the Spirit, is not to be connected with being under the Mosaic legal pedagogy; but with being "under the law" in that sense in which all men are naturally so, until they become dead to the law by virtue of the cross of Christ, and by being united to him by true faith.—*Fraser*.

Ver. 7—13. The apostle here changes the person, and speaks of himself, while assuming another character. It is that of a man first ignorant of the law, then under it, and sincerely desiring to please God, but finding to his sorrow the weakness of the motives it suggested, and the sad discouragement under which it left him; last of all, with transport discovering the gospel, gaining pardon and strength, peace and joy by it. —(80.)

There is no way of coming to that knowledge of sin, which is necessary to

repentance, and consequently to peace and pardon, but by comparing our hearts and lives with the law. In his own case the apostle would not have known the sinfulness of his thoughts, motives, and actions, but by the law. That exact balance detected the deficiency of his obedience, that perfect standard showed how wrong were his heart and life, proving his sins to be more numerous than he had ever before imagined, yet it contained no provision of mercy or grace for his relief.

And it may well be doubted if there is any motion of wrong desire of any sort, so spontaneous and without deliberation, that has not, in some degree, the consent of the heart and will; and there is good appearance of reason for thinking there is something of will in the very first motions of irregular appetite. And if the law of God enters, with its proper light and authority, it will surely find that the very first motions of irregular desire are contrary to the purity and rectitude it requires, and consequently are sinful, and so are comprehended in the sin, of which Paul got the knowledge by the law. But as the law is so adverse to sin; surely the cause of sin, and of sinful passions and lustings in the heart, is to be looked for elsewhere than in the law.—(81.)

Particularly, the apostle came to know the sinfulness of lust, by the law of the tenth commandment, ver. 7. By lust, he means sin dwelling in us, sin in its first motions and workings, the corrupt principle. This he came to know when the law said, Thou shalt not covet, in the spiritual sense and meaning of it. By this he knew that lust is sin, and a very great sin; that those motions and desires of the heart toward sin, which never came into act, are sinful, exceeding sinful. By his natural conscience, without the law, he would not have supposed that while free from adultery, theft, or murder, the desire of a forbidden indulgence, or an object withheld by providence, was criminal, ~~so~~ as to expose him to the curse of the law. Nay, sin, traitorously watching the opportunity of destroying him, took occasion to lead his heart after forbidden objects, as if there were greater satisfaction in them than in those which were not forbidden. He is ignorant of human nature and the perverseness of his own heart, who does not perceive in himself a propensity to

fancy there is something desirable in what is out of reach. It is natural to expect this in the posterity of those who could be satisfied with no fruit in the garden of God, except that which was forbidden. We may readily perceive this propensity in our children, though self-love makes us blind to it in ourselves. The spiritual precepts and awful sanctions of the law, excite the depravity of the heart, which rushes more impetuously into transgression in opposition to it. Without the law sin was dead, as a snake in winter, which the sunbeams of the law quicken and irritate, ver. 8.

Paul had a quick and piercing judgment, with all the advantages and improvements of instruction, and yet he never got the right knowledge of indwelling sin, till the Spirit by the law made it known to him. There is nothing about which the natural man is more blind, than about original corruption, concerning which the understanding is altogether in the dark, till the Spirit, by the law, reveals it, and makes it known. Of this excellent use is the law, it is a lamp and a light, it converts the soul, opens the eyes, prepares the way of the Lord in the desert, rends the rocks, levels the mountains, makes ready a people prepared for the Lord. The apostle speaks of himself, ver. 9, and his own experience. The more humble and spiritual any christian is, the more clearly will he perceive that the apostle in this chapter describes the experience of the true believer, from his first convictions to his greatest progress in grace, during this present imperfect state. His avowed object is to show that the law can do nothing for a sinner, either to justify or to sanctify him; and that the believer feels this daily, as long as he lives. He was once a pharisee, ignorant of the spirituality of the law, having some correctness of character without any acquaintance with his inward depravity. But when the commandment came to his conscience by the convictions of the Holy Spirit, and he perceived its just requirements and severe denunciations, he found his sinful propensities rise against it. Thus his former confidence died away, he found himself a helpless sinner under merited condemnation, and became as a dead man till the gospel revived him. Thus the law, originally ordained for life to man in a holy state,

and from which he had expected heaven, was found to be unto death, even as the law of any country is found to be unto death, by the offender, ver. 10.

When by the convictions of the Holy Spirit, his conscience was struck with the holiness of the commandment, and its severe denunciations, he felt at the same time the malignity of sin, his own sinful state, and his inability to fulfil the law. As a sunbeam darting into a room brings to view and discovers the moles and dark spots which before lay undistinguished, so the light of the Spirit, when it illumines the soul, shows the whole heinousness of sin, which, having been unfelt before, is now said to revive. He found himself a helpless sinner, and, as a criminal when convicted and condemned by the laws of his country, to be dead.—(100)

For sin, the evil principle in his fallen nature, perversely took occasion from the strictness of the commandments of the law, to rebel against it as unreasonable, and too severe to be laid upon human nature, ver. 11. By this, and various other deceptions, it ensnared, as in the case of our first parents, and drew to the committing many evils which God had forbidden, and by this means brought the apostle more and more under the heaviest sentence of condemnation and death; and when afterwards it came home in spirituality and power to his conscience, it slew the high thoughts and confidences which he had entertained about his own sufficiency to keep it, and his own righteousness to recommend to God.—(81 f)

Wherefore, though the evil principle in the human heart produces such concupiscence, and sinful motions, more vehemently on occasion of the commandment; yet the law in itself is holy, and the commandment holy, just, and good. It is not at all favourable to sin, which it pursues into the heart, and discovers and reproves in the very inward motions thereof, ver. 12.—(81 f)

Each commandment of the moral law is most holy, as opposed to moral evil; most just, as requiring nothing more than what is righteously due to God and our neighbours; most good, as tending to the true welfare of ourselves, our families, and all mankind. Wherever there is true grace, there is assent to this, that the law is holy, just, and

good. Nothing so good but a corrupt and vicious nature will pervert it, and make it an occasion of sin; no flower so sweet. The worst thing that sin does, and most like itself, is the perverting of the law, and taking occasion from it to be so much the more malignant. Thus the commandment, which was ordained to life, was intended as a guide in the way to comfort and happiness, has proved unto death, through the corruption of nature. Many a soul splits upon the rock of salvation. And the same word which to some is an occasion of life unto life, is to others an occasion of death unto death, ver. 13. The same sun that makes the flower garden more fragrant, makes the dunghill more noisome; the same heat that softens wax, hardens clay; and the same Child was set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel. The way to prevent this mischief, is, to bow our souls to the commanding authority of the word and law of God, not striving against, but submitting to it. Was this good law made death to those who were under it? was this its natural tendency? The apostle rejects the conclusion with detestation. Food or medicine when taken wrong, may occasion death, though its natural tendency is to nourish and to heal. The law may occasion death through man's depravity, but sin is the poison that causes death. It was not therefore the law, but sin, that was made death to the apostle. From the goodness of the law, its deformity and malignity were manifest. Thus through the commandment, sin became exceedingly sinful; the hateful and ruinous nature of sin, as well as the sinfulness of the human heart were clearly shown, so that the abounding grace of God appeared more glorious.

For sin being the cause of death, had been so equally, had there been no spiritual application of the law to discover the secrets of the heart till the day of judgment: then, if not before, every sin must be dragged to light. The commandment discovers sin, sets it in action, so that it may be known and felt, that the heart may not be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin, and in consequence the riches of grace be despised and slighted.—(25.)

7. This proves that the covetousness forbidden in the tenth commandment relates to the heart, and it might be a hint to all thinking

men, that the secret powers of their souls are under Divine inspection, and that much guilt may be contracted which does not appear to a human eye.—*Doddridge*. The passage is thus completed by *Wickliff*. "For I wist not that coveting was sin but for the law said, Thou shalt not covet."

8. *Praser* says we may conclude the apostle to be speaking on a more extensive view than to denote merely the tenth commandment. The words in ver. 7 and 8, rendered by "lust," "covet," and "concupiscence," ought strictly to be rendered by one of them, as thus, "I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not lust; and sin wrought in me all manner of lust." As the carnal mind is not subject to the law of God, there is in it lusting in opposition to every command in particular; and every commandment is so to be understood as forbidding the particular lusting that has the least tendency to the prohibited act. This appears by our Lord's interpretation of the sixth and seventh commandment in Matt. 5.

—*Pareus* illustrates this verse by the following similitude. A physician forbids his patient the use of wine or of other strong drink. The patient who perhaps was not thinking of strong drink, now eagerly longs for it. The proper cause of this is not the advice of the physician, which is good and right, but the man's own heart, under a sickly disposition.

—*Doddridge* paraphrases thus, "So that I may say that sin, taking occasion from the awful sanction of the commandment, the wrath and ruin which it denounced, brought me into so sad a situation of mind, and left me so little strength and spirit to resist future temptation, when I seemed already undone, that it might in a manner be said to have wrought in me all manner of concupiscence; such advantage did sin gain against me."

10. "I felt spiritually dead, as guilty of death." *Blossfield*. In a note on this passage *Shuttleworth* shows the inefficacy of the instruction of the mere science of morals, and the absolute necessity of the gospel to procure our reconciliation with God.

Ver. 14—17. The apostle had been speaking of himself, showing how matters had been with him, formerly when under the law, representing how it is with persons under the law, who as long as they are so are under the dominion of sin. He proceeds to show how things were with him in a state of grace, and from ver. 14, there is represented a person and state very different from being under the law, in the flesh. And we see here that the apostle speaks with a special view to the spirituality of the law of God, as it gives rule to a man's heart and spirit within, and to all inward thoughts and motions in the soul. If we once conclude that the blessed apostle Paul found some sin and unholy affections remaining and stirring in his heart, then if a person advanced to an uncommon degree in holiness, he would express himself concerning the matter,

in language uncommonly strong and bitter. Such will have a much more quick feeling, and bitter complaint of sin, than others less holy.—(81.f.)

Compared with the holy rule of conduct in the law of God, the apostle found that he was carnal, sold under sin. After all his attainments in grace he found himself so very far short of this perfection, that he seemed to be carnal; like a man who is sold against his will to a hated master, from whom he can by no means set himself at liberty. Such things are verified in the experience of a real christian. He unwillingly serves this hated master, yet cannot shake off the galling chain till his powerful and gracious Friend rescues him. His inability is only in the remaining evil of his heart, yet it is a real but humbling hinderance to his serving God, as angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect. This strong language was the result of St. Paul's advance in holiness, and the depth of his self-abasement and hatred of sin. If we do not understand this language, it is because we are so far beneath him in holiness, knowledge of the spirituality of God's law, and the evil of our own hearts, and hatred of moral evil. Numbers of eminent believers have adopted the apostle's language, showing that it is suitable to their deep feelings of abhorrence of sin, and self-abasement.

The apostle enlarges on the conflict which he daily maintained with the remainder of his original depravity. He was frequently tempted by the sin that dwelt in him, into such tempers, words, or actions, as he did not approve or allow, in his renewed judgment and affections, ver. 15. He consented to the law, that it was good, and as his soul earnestly desired to be holy, he was evidenced thereby to be a regenerate man, under the covenant of grace. The apostle did not mean to excuse his sinfulness, as if he might not justly have been condemned for it, but to show that righteousness could in no case be by the law, and that, by the grace of the gospel, a man's state and character are determined according to what habitually prevails in the heart.

This habitual inclination of his will shows that he heartily consents to the goodness of the law, that it is good in itself, and prescribes that which is good

for us with a view to our duty and happiness, ver. 16. Though, strictly speaking, he did all that was done by the activity of sin in his heart; and though he could not justify himself before this holy and spiritual law, and say he was not chargeable with it; yet grace allowed him to take some comfort by distinguishing and saying, It is not I myself who do the evil, which I sincerely hate, and which is so contrary to the habitual inclination of my will; but my greatest real enemy, sin, which continues its indwelling, though not its dominion in me.—(81.f.)

By distinguishing his real self, that is, his spiritual part, from the self, or flesh, in which sin dwelt, and by observing that the evil actions he committed were done, not by him, but by sin dwelling in him, the apostle did not mean that wicked men are not accountable for their sins, but to make them sensible of the evil of their sins, by showing them that they are all committed in opposition to reason and conscience, the superior part of their nature, at the instigation of passion and lust, the lower part. By appealing to the opposition which reason and conscience make to evil actions, he has overturned the great argument by which the wicked seek to justify themselves in indulging their lusts. Do they say that God has given us passions and lusts, meaning we should gratify them? The apostle says, God has given us reason and conscience, which oppose these excesses, and condemn their gratification.—(90.)

Sin dwelling in a man does not prove its ruling, or having dominion in him. If a man dwells in this city or in that country, the expression imports not that he rules there. The captive jews dwelt in Babylon, Zech. 2. 7, but it surely were wrong to infer that the jews in captivity had the dominion there.—(81.f.)

14. The apostle, in the former part of the chapter spoke of what he was before conversion; he now, all along to the end of the chapter, speaks of himself, in the present tense, with regard to what he experienced, after he was converted, in the struggles that passed in his own soul, between the remainders of indwelling corruption, and the principle of grace which was wrought in him.—The style he here uses is entirely different from that, in which he speaks of unregenerate men, in the foregoing and following context.—*Guyse.*

Ver. 18—22. All christians may be

assured that a growing sensibility of conscience and heart with respect to sin, outwardly and inwardly, is among the chief evidences of the growth of grace. The more pure and holy the heart is, it will naturally have the more quick feeling of what sin remains in it.—(81.f.)

Thus the apostle knew that in him, as a fallen creature, apart from regenerating grace, no good thing but only sin was to be found; for the unregenerate human nature, the old man, the flesh, as distinct from the soul, never concurs with the Holy Spirit in regeneration, or with the new man afterwards, but always strives against both. He would do good; he allows nothing contrary to the law, he wants no change in it, but desires to have his heart brought into perfect conformity to it. He abhors sin, watches and prays against it, yet finds that he cannot attain to perfection. Still he earnestly prays against sin, he dreads it more than pain or death. He sees more of the beauty of holiness, the excellency of the law and its obligations to obedience. His earnest desires increase after these as he grows in grace.

But the whole good which his will is fully bent on, and inclined to, he does not perform; sin ever springing up in him, through remaining corruption, he often does evil, though against the fixed determination of his will. Yet as a man's moral character is to be taken from the sincere, habitual inclination of his heart and will; if, by the influence of the flesh he did what was contrary to the spiritual and holy law, and what his will was averse to, he would somewhat encourage himself with the thought that it was not his very self that did it, but sin, dwelling in him. Thus the apostle had it greatly at heart to perform his duty; though he did not attain to perform it in the perfect manner he willed. He struggled and was grievously oppressed by the resistance of the flesh. The very first motions of sin within gave him grief. If by the lusting of the flesh against the Spirit, he could not do or perform as the Spirit suggested, so, by the effectual opposition of the Spirit, he could not do what the flesh prompted him to. How different this case from that of those who grasp at a pretence to make themselves easy with regard to the inward motions of the flesh prompting

them to evil; who against the light and urgency of conscience, go on, even in outward practice, to do evil, and thus deliberately put themselves in the road to perdition!—(81.f.)

When the will of the apostle was well determined to that which is good; he found a law, not such as had a true right, and just authority, but a principle strong and effective, and evil, even the unholy motions of corrupt nature, which took the start of his better will, and prevented its effect; so that he could not do what he would, in the inward and outward practice of holiness, ver. 21. Yet it is the man who shows such sensibility with regard to the motions of sin within him, and to the conflict against them, who is most likely to have all his conversation and behaviour such that, like the apostle, his body is kept under and brought into subjection, lest he be a cast-away, 1 Cor. 9. 27.—(81.f.)

For as the believer is under grace, and his will by habitual inclination is continually on the side of holiness, he sincerely delights in the law of God, and in the holiness which it recommends and requires, according to his inward man, that new man in him, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness, ver. 22. There is in such a heart that which dutifully entertains the precept, though the flesh tends to draw a different way. The effects of the law in the heart are not, as in the unregenerate, that the holy commandment rouses the powers of sin; or that the curse irritates the rebellious disposition of the heart. In the precept the regenerate person perceives the beauty of holiness; and the curse of the law being altogether just and right in his eyes, his deliverance from it exalts the Lord in his view, endears his grace, and engages him more and more under the Lord's yoke, disposing him to bear testimony, that by Divine grace and love it is easy. If he finds himself enticed by evil desires, it is not said that lust ordinarily brings forth fruit in the practice. It may so happen to a true christian, but there is nothing that imports that it is usually the case.—(81.f.)

The remainders of indwelling sin are a very grievous burden to a gracious soul. All that are savingly regenerate and born again, do truly delight in the law of God; delight to know it, to do

it; cheerfully submit to the authority of it, and take a complacency in that submission. They are never better pleased than when heart and life are in the strictest conformity to the law and will of God; and to approve and delight in the law of God after the inner man, must be peculiar to the regenerate.

These have the greatest complacency, and the noblest satisfaction, in all the pure and spiritual precepts of God's law, as right and good, and as what they take the highest pleasure in obeying, according to the prevailing sense of all the powers of the soul, and so far as they are renewed.—(82.)

22. Though "the inner man" primarily signifies the soul, in the apostle's use of the expression, it takes in also the idea of a renewed soul, and answers to what he, at other times, calls the new man.—*Guyse*.

—By the inward man is meant the same as "the new man," or the soul so far as renewed by Divine grace. It cannot mean the mind or understanding, which is not the same as the 'soul,' but signifies only a particular faculty of the soul.—*Fraser*.

Ver. 23—25. Although by delight in the holiness of the law, the believer's heart has an habitual and prevailing determination to holiness; yet he finds a law in his members, which has in some degree invested all his faculties, giving a false light and prejudice to the mind and judgment, often a corrupt bias to the will, putting the evil affections and passions in motion, and so warring against the law of his mind, that good principle and law which God, according to the promise of the new covenant has written in his heart, Jer. 31. 33, Heb. 8. 10, thus aiming to captivate him to the law of sin which is in his members. This passage does not represent the apostle as one that walked after the flesh, but as one that had it greatly at heart, not to walk so. He appears all along in resistance and conflict against sin. We have here what may be of use to support and encourage those who go heavily under the evil of their hearts. And if there are those who may abuse this passage, as they also do the other scriptures to their own destruction, yet serious christians find cause to bless God for having thus provided for their support and comfort in their warfare; and we are not for the abuse of such as are blinded by their "lusts, to charge faultiness on the

scripture, or on any just and well warranted interpretation of it.—(81.f.)

No man who is not himself engaged in this conflict, can clearly understand the meaning of these words, or rightly judge concerning this painful conflict, which led the apostle to bemoan himself as a wretched man, constrained to what he abhorred. With eagerness he exclaimed, O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? For the sin which dwelt in him clogged his motions, even as if any one should be forced to drag about with him a putrifying corpse. He could not deliver himself, and this made him the more fervently thank God for the method of salvation revealed through Jesus Christ, which promised him a final and complete deliverance from this enemy. So then, says he, I myself, with my mind, my prevailing judgment, affections, and purposes, as a regenerate man, by Divine grace, serve and obey the law of God; but with the flesh, the carnal nature, the remains of depravity, I serve the law of sin, which wars against the law of my mind.

Not serving it so as to live in it, or to allow it in any one instance, but as being unable to free himself from it even in his very best estate, and being under the necessity of looking for help and deliverance out of himself. It is evident that he thanks God for Christ, as our deliverer, in the sense he has all along been pleading for and establishing, as our atonement and righteousness in himself, and not because of any holiness wrought in us. He knew of no such salvation; disowned any such title to it, being willing indeed to act in all points agreeably to the dictates of the law, his mind, and conscience; but being hindered by indwelling sin, and never attaining the perfection which the law absolutely requires. What can be deliverance for a man always sinful, but the free grace of God, as exhibited and offered in Christ Jesus?—(71.)

It is easy for men to say they are wretched, who never had any true sense of wretchedness from the strength of sin. It is also easy for men to express thankfulness, and to profess the faith of total deliverance from sin, who have no such faith in their hearts. But for a man, who has great bitterness of heart by the feeling of sin in him; who finds that

working out deliverance from it exceeds all his own powers, and utmost efforts; who earnestly bemoans his wretchedness by it; for such a man to express as with the same breath, his joyful thankfulness for the prospect and hope of deliverance from the body of death, could not be without that faith supporting and solacing his heart, which is a certain fruit and evidence of regeneration.—(81 f)

With this prospect and support, he manfully sustains the conflict; the consciousness of his guilt and danger renders the Redeemer's love and complete salvation doubly precious to his soul. His very anguish from such a source is a pledge of his happiness, having wrestled and prevailed for the blessing. His comfort was found in Christ Jesus; I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. In the midst of his complaints he breaks out into praises. It is a special remedy against fears and sorrows, to be much in praise: many a poor drooping soul has found it so. And in all our praises, this should be the burden of the song, "Blessed be God for Jesus Christ." Who shall deliver me? said he, as one at a loss for help. At length, he found an all-sufficient Friend, even Jesus Christ. When we are under the sense of the remaining power of sin and corruption, we shall see reason to bless God through Christ; for as he is the Mediator of all our prayers, so he is of all our praises. And to bless God for Christ; it is He stands between us and the wrath due to us for this sin. If it were not for Christ, this iniquity that dwells in us, would certainly be our ruin. He is our Advocate with the Father, and through him God pities, and spares, and pardons, and lays not our iniquities to our charge. It shall be pleaded that it was not he, but sin that dwelt in him. But if a man is indifferent on this subject; if sin dwelling in him is an excuse for sins committed; if he allows the evil, and desires not the good, presuming that he has all things in Christ; if, instead of consenting to the law, condemning himself, and loathing his sins, he speaks lightly of the law and his own guilt; if his utmost willingness is, merely to escape hell, without longing to be holy according to the spiritual meaning of God's law; if he does not delight in it after the inner

man, nor serve it with the prevailing desire of his mind, but willingly serves the law of sin; then doubtless he is without Christ, whose name he profanes, he is under the law which he hates; and his presumptuous confidence only proves that he believes a lie. Such a professor this chapter evidently condemns. It is Christ that has purchased deliverance for us in due time. Through Christ death will put an end to all these complaints, and waft us to an eternity which we shall spend without sin or sigh. Blessed be God that giveth us this victory through our Lord Jesus Christ! Here we have the expression of the apostle's thankfulness for the advantage he had already obtained against the flesh; and the freedom he had by Divine grace attained from the law in his members.

We have also here occasion to see the sad corruption which human nature has undergone; how deep the root of sin has gone in the hearts of men; and how great its force and activity is in the best of men. In the context preceding ver. 14, we have seen the case of an unregenerate person, as to the corruption of human nature. In the latter context we have the case of a man under grace, yet making heavy and sore complaint of sin dwelling in him. Shall we now say, that the greatest advantage and strength which sin has in the heart of any man, is only by deeply rooted habits, contracted by the continued custom of sinning, proceeding only from the unhappy use each man makes of his free-will? We have here before us what does not allow us to think so. If man's nature itself were not depraved and corrupted to a high degree, what mere habits could be so strong, but they might be overcome by the endeavours of a man under the sharp discipline of the law in his conscience? But if in this state and way a man could not do it, might we not suppose that a man made free from the dominion of sin, by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost, and brought under grace, which has that in it which tends to engage a man most effectually to holiness, would be able by the earnest exertion of all his moral powers, with the assistance of the Holy Spirit dwelling in him, completely to overcome any small remainder of natural depravity,

and evil habits, so that there should be no remainder of sin in him?—(81f.)

But which of the saints is it, whose experience has testified any such thing? Might we not expect to find it in this eminent apostle's, considering his attainment in grace, light and holiness? Yet how far from this the case here represented! In the persons most eminent for holiness, whose history we have at any length in scripture, this evil fountain discovered itself by the streams it sent forth. And if this blessed apostle was preserved from remarkable lapses in outward practice, yet here, where he lays open his heart, he shows the source of sin yet remaining within him; by which he had matter of constant exercise, of struggle, and of godly sorrow; confirming the good advice given to every christian, Thou standest by faith; be not high-minded, but fear. We have here what accounts for it, and shows it shall ever be so, while christians are in this life.—(81f.)

This is that original sin, which every one has derived from a corrupt original, which is itself the source of all a man's moral deficiencies and actual transgressions in outward and inward practice; whose root is so deep in human nature as never to be wholly eradicated in this life. The power of Divine grace, and of the Holy Spirit, doubtless could soon do this, and perfectly, if Divine wisdom had not otherwise thought fit. But it was suffered that christians should labour under imperfection, and having the remainder of sin in them to struggle with. that with minds well enlightened, and hearts truly sanctified, they might, from what they constantly feel, perceive sensibly and understand thoroughly, the wretched state from which Divine grace saves them; might be kept from trusting in themselves; and might ever hold all their consolation and hope, from the rich and free grace of God in Jesus Christ, through faith.—(81f.)

24. Though a man who is regenerate, is happy in the main; yet such a man may be wretched in several respects, and may complain bitterly of being so. If a good christian in the distressing paroxysm of a chronic disease, should cry out, "O wretched man that I am," it were surely rash and foolish to conclude that he was unregenerate, and not under grace. A sanctified heart, conscious of the motions of sin in itself, certainly has no less cause to cry out of its wretchedness.—Final absolute despair certainly is inconsistent with a state of grace; but we must not consider the expression, Who shall

deliver me, as implying this; we must not so judge of the suggestions of despair, even when uttered in strong terms from the force of temptation. That there is no despair in this instance appears from the words of thankfulness which follow.—*Fraser.*

25. This expression of thankfulness to Christ, sufficiently shows that the apostle is not here personating an infidel jew, or a heathen; and the same is proved by the closely connected and triumphant inference with which the next chapter begins.

CHAPTER VIII.

The apostle sets forth the freedom of believers from condemnation, and their real character, by which they may be distinguished from all others, ver. 1-9. Their privileges in having the Spirit of Christ, as their principle of life, their guide and witness, and their being the children of God, and heirs of glory, 10-17. The comfort of their hopeful prospects under all present tribulations, 18-25. Their assistance from the Spirit in prayer, 26, 27. Their interest in the love of God, as the original spring of all their blessings, 28-30. And their triumph, through Christ, over all the enemies of their salvation, 31-39.

Ver. 1-9. This chapter begins with an inference from the apostle's discourse and doctrine in the preceding part of the epistle. He treated largely of the justification of sinners, by grace through faith, in the first five chapters. In the sixth and seventh he had treated of what concerns sanctification. He had represented persons under the law as being in the flesh, under the dominion of sin and its servants; but persons brought under grace by free justification, as being made free from that servitude; as being become the servants of God, and having their fruit unto holiness. He thus had proper occasion to add, as the mark of persons in Christ justified and free from condemnation, that they walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit. It is not their so walking that frees them from condemnation; but being by gratuitous justification freed from condemnation, and brought under grace, and thereby made free from the dominion of sin, they will, in their ordinary course, walk as is here said. After this inference from his doctrine of justification and sanctification, the apostle, through this whole eighth chapter, discourses with reference to both subjects, and concerning the consolation, and the obligation to holy living rising from both, according to

the inseparable connexion between them in the work of our salvation.—(81.f.)

The apostle here speaks of the signal privilege of true christians, and describes the character of those to whom it belongs. There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, ver. 1. This is his triumph after that melancholy complaint and conflict in the foregoing chapter; sin remaining, disturbing, vexing, but blessed be God, not ruining. The complaint he takes to himself, but shares the comfort with all true believers, who are all interested in it. It is the unspeakable privilege and comfort of all those that are in Christ Jesus, that there is, therefore now no condemnation to them. He does not say, "There is no accusation against them." He does not say, "There is nothing in them that deserves condemnation," for they see it, and own it, and mourn over it, and condemn themselves for it; but it shall not be their ruin. He does not say, "There is no cross, no affliction to them, no displeasure in the affliction," for that there may be; but, no condemnation. They may be chastened of the Lord, but not condemned with the world. Now this arises from their being in Christ Jesus; by their union with him through faith, they are thus secured. They are in Christ Jesus, as in their city of refuge, and so are protected from the avenger of blood. He is their Advocate, and procures their deliverance. There is therefore no condemnation, because they are interested in the satisfaction that Christ by dying made to the law. In Christ, God not only does not condemn them, but is well pleased with them, Matt. 17. 5. It is the undoubted character of all those who are so in Christ Jesus, as to be freed from condemnation, that they walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit, by the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, who by means of the gospel, has made them free from corrupt nature, the law of sin and death, by regenerating grace, with power inducing a contrary conduct.

Walking imports a man's habitual and deliberate course; in which he freely proceeds, without force, struggle, or constraint; neither violently drawn, carried nor captivated; but going according to his own inclination.—(81.f.)

Observe, the character is given from their walk; not from one particular act,

but from their course and way. And the great question is, What is the principle of the walk; the flesh or the Spirit, the old or the new nature, corruption or grace? Which of these do we mind, for which of these do we make provision, by which of these are we governed, which of these do we take part with? Though the remaining power of sin greatly harasses them, and in some instances, even prevails, yet on the whole they are enabled successfully to resist its authority, and to walk in obedience to God's commands. This great truth is illustrated in the following verses; and shows how we come by this great privilege, and how we may answer this character.

1. How we come by the privilege of justification, that there is no condemnation to us, and the privilege of sanctification, that we walk after the Spirit, and not after the flesh, which is no less our privilege than it is our duty. The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus does it, ver. 2. The covenant of grace made with us in Christ, is a treasury from whence we receive pardon and a new nature; are freed from the law of sin and death, that is, both from the guilt and power of sin; from the curse of the law, and the conduct of the flesh. We are under another covenant, under the law of the Spirit, the law that gives the Spirit.

The Holy Spirit was bestowed on Christ, the Mediator, without measure; he has been anointed with this oil of gladness: and it being poured on him as our great High-Priest and Head, as on the head of Aaron, Ps. 133. 2, it runs down on the body and members. So the Holy Spirit is in Christ as in a fountain, out of which every one receives according to the measure of the gift of Christ, Eph. 4. 7. Or, the Spirit of life by Jesus Christ, the sense may be taken as, by him purchased and bestowed.—(81.f.)

The law could not do it, ver. 3. It could neither justify nor sanctify, neither free us from the guilt, nor from the power of sin, having not the promises either of pardon or grace. It was weak, yet not through any defect in the law, but through the flesh, through the corruption of human nature, by which we became incapable of being justified and sanctified by the law. We were unable to keep the law, and in case of failure, the law, as a covenant of works, made no provision, so left us as it found us,

The unregenerate will is unable to observe any one commandment in its entire substance. And it must be remembered, that the law, besides external duties, requires inward obedience, in knowledge of God and his will, in faith, hope, love, patience, and in the subjection of our thoughts, wills, and affections to the will of God. In respect of this inward and spiritual obedience, the Holy Ghost saith, the law cannot fulfil it, and that the wisdom of the flesh cannot be subject to the law of God, that this is the yoke neither we nor our fathers could bear, Acts 15. 10.—(56)

The foundation of freedom is laid in Christ's undertaking for us, God sending his own Son, ver. 3. Thus what the law could not do, Christ did. The best exposition of this verse we have Heb. 10. 1—10. Observe, how Christ appeared, in the likeness of sinful flesh. Not sinful, for he was holy, harmless, undefiled; but in the likeness of that flesh which was sinful. He took upon him that nature which was corrupt, though perfectly free from the corruptions of it. And for sin, God sent him in the likeness of sinful flesh, and as a sacrifice for sin, he was sent to be so, Heb. 9. 26.

By this appearance sin was condemned; God therein manifested hatred of sin; not only so, but for all that are Christ's, both the condemning and domineering power of sin is broken and taken out of the way. Thus, by Christ is sin condemned; though it live and remain, its life in the saints is but that of a condemned malefactor. The condemning of sin saved the sinner from condemnation. Christ was made sin for us, 2 Cor. 5. 21, and, being so made, when he was condemned, sin was condemned in the flesh of Christ; condemned in the human nature. God showed his abhorrence of sin by the sufferings of his Son in the flesh, that the believer's person might be pardoned and justified. So was satisfaction made to Divine justice, and a way made for the salvation of the sinner.

The happy effect of this upon us was, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, ver. 4. Both in our justification and in our sanctification, the righteousness of the law is fulfilled. The righteousness of satisfaction for the breach of the law, is fulfilled by the imputation of Christ's complete and perfect righteousness, which answers the utmost

demands of the law, as the mercy-sent was as long and as broad as the ark. By the Spirit the law of love is written upon the heart, and though the righteousness of the law is not fulfilled by us, yet, blessed be God, it is fulfilled in us; there is that to be found upon and in all true believers, which answers the intention of the law. Us who walk not: there is the description of all those interested in this privilege, they act from spiritual, and not from carnal principles; as for others, the righteousness of the law will be fulfilled upon them in their ruin.

2. Observe how we may know if we answer to this character, ver. 5, &c. By looking to our minds. Carnal pleasure, worldly profit and honour, the things of sense and time, are the things of the flesh, which unregenerate people mind. The favour of God, the welfare of the soul, the concerns of eternity, are the things of the Spirit, which they that are after the Spirit, do mind. The man is as the mind is. As he thinketh in his heart, so is he, Prov. 23. 7. Which way do the thoughts move with most pleasure? On what do they dwell with most satisfaction? Which way go the projects and contrivances? Whether are we more wise for the world, or for our souls? They savour the things of the flesh; so the word is rendered, Matt. 16. 23. It is a great matter what our savour is; what truths, what tidings, what comforts, we most relish, what are most agreeable to us. To caution us against this carnal-mindedness, we are shown the great misery and malignity of it, and it is compared with the unspeakable excellency and comfort of spiritual mindedness. It is death, ver. 6. It is spiritual death, the certain way to eternal death. It is the death of the soul; for it is alienation from God, in union and communion with whom the life of the soul consists. A carnal soul is a dead soul. Those that live in pleasure are dead, 1 Tim. 5. 6, not only dead in law as guilty, but dead in state as carnal. Death includes all misery; carnal souls are miserable souls. But, to be spiritually minded, to have a spiritual savour, wisdom that is from above, a principle of grace, is life and peace; it is the happiness of the soul. A sanctified soul is a living soul; and that life is peace. It is life and peace in the other world, as well as in this, Spiritual-mindedness is eternal life

and peace begun, and an assuring earnest of perfection therein.

The carnal mind is enmity to God, ver. 7. The former speaks the carnal sinner a dead man, but this speaks him a devil. Not only an enemy, but enmity itself. It is not only the alienation of the soul from God, but the opposition of the soul against God; it rebels against his authority, thwarts his designs, opposes his interest, spurns at his mercy. Can there be a greater enmity? An enemy may be reconciled, but enmity cannot. How should this humble us for carnal-mindedness, and warn us against it! Shall we harbour and indulge that which is enmity to God our Creator, Owner, Ruler, and Benefactor? To prove this, consider that it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. The holiness of the law of God, and the unholiness of the carnal mind, are as irreconcilable as light to darkness. The carnal *man* may, by the power of Divine grace, be made subject to the law of God, but the carnal *mind* never can; that must be broken and expelled. See how wretchedly the corrupt will of man is enslaved to sin; as far as the carnal mind prevails, there is no inclination to the law of God; wherever there is a change wrought, it is by the power of God's grace, not by the freedom of man's will.

From hence there is inferred, ver. 8, They that are in the flesh, cannot please God. They that are in a carnal unregenerate state, under the reigning power of sin, cannot do the things that please God; wanting grace, the pleasing principle, and an interest in Christ, the pleasing Mediator. Pleasing God is our highest end, of which those who are in the flesh cannot but fall short; they cannot please him, nay they cannot but displease him. Man's apostasy began by his preferring the satisfaction to be found in the creatures through disobedience, to the happiness to be enjoyed in God through obedience. This is the universal idolatry, and it is evident that unregenerate men cannot please God.

We may know our real state and character by inquiring whether we have the Spirit of God and Christ, or not, ver. 9. Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit. This expresses two states and conditions of the soul widely different. All the saints have flesh and spirit in them; but to be in the flesh, and to be

in the Spirit, are contrary. It denotes our being overcome and subdued by one of these principles. Now the great question is, whether we are in the flesh, or in the Spirit; and how may we come to know it? By inquiring whether the Spirit of God dwells in us. The Spirit dwelling in us is the best evidence of our being in the Spirit, 1 John 4. 16.

And it may be considered rather as a note of confidence than of doubt, concerning the Spirit of God dwelling in those whom the apostle had spoken of. They are assuredly regenerated and ruled by this Divine Spirit, in case he really dwells in them, as the apostle trusted that he dwelt in those whom he spoke of.—(92.)

In all that are sanctified the Spirit dwells; there he resides and rules. He is there as a man at his own house, where he is constant and welcome, and has the dominion. Shall we not put this question to our own hearts, Who dwells, who rules, who keeps house, here? Which interest has the ascendancy? To this is subjoined a general rule of trial; If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. To be Christ's, to be a christian indeed, one of his children, his servant, his friend, in union with him, is a privilege and honour which many pretend to, that have no part nor lot in the matter. None are his but those that have his Spirit; that are meek, and lowly, and humble, and peaceable, and patient, and charitable, as he was. We cannot tread in his steps, unless we have his Spirit; the frame and disposition of our souls must be conformable to Christ's pattern. Also that are actuated and guided by the Holy Spirit of God, as a Sanctifier, Teacher, and Comforter. Having the Spirit of Christ is the same with having the Spirit of God, God the Holy Spirit, to dwell in us; for all that are actuated by the Spirit of God as their rule, are conformable to the Spirit of Christ as their pattern.

Having the Spirit of Christ, must certainly mean having a disposition and turn of mind, in some degree conformable to the mind that was in Christ Jesus, to be evidenced by a life and conversation suitable to his precepts and example. He was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners: he went about doing good. He was gentle, compassionate, meek and patient, most active for the glory of God. So affected with the

worth of souls, that he wept over his bitterest enemies; so intent on his charitable designs towards men, that the opportunity of helping or instructing them made him forget wants, weariness, and pain. So full of devotion that when the day had been wholly consumed in labours of love, he would frequently redeem whole nights for prayer. But we must stop. No pen can describe, no tongue can speak, no heart conceive, the life of the Son of God in the flesh! Yet in all these things he was our great exemplar; and no profession or appellation can benefit us, unless we are of those who copy closely and carefully after Him, 1 John 2. 4—6.—(51.)

1. Some critical writers omit the latter clause of this verse, but although the words are repeated in ver. 4, there does not appear sufficient evidence for this omission.—See *Bloomfield*.

3. "And as a sacrifice for sin."—*Schulefield*. That it signifies "a sacrifice for sin," is very apparent from Heb. 10. 6; 2 Cor. 5. 21, and a vast many other passages.—*Doddsbridge*. One hundred and eight instances are stated by *A. Clarke*, on 2 Cor. 5. 21, from both Testaments, in which the word "sin" is put for "sin-offering."

6. "Is death," by metonymy of the effect for the cause, carnal-mindedness is the way which leadeth to death.—*Valpy*

Ver. 10—17. In these verses the apostle represents two excellent benefits, which belong to true believers. Life, an advancement to a life that will be the unspeakable happiness of the man, ver. 10, 11. If Christ be in you. Observe, if the Spirit be in us, Christ is in us. He dwells in the heart by faith, Eph. 3. 17. The body is dead; it is a frail, mortal, dying body; and it will be dead shortly, be it ever so strong, and healthful, Heb. 11. 12, and this, because of sin. The death even of the bodies of the saints is a remaining token of God's displeasure against sin. But the spirit, the precious soul, that is life. Grace in the soul is its new nature; the soul is alive to God, and has begun its holy happiness which shall endure for ever. And this, because of righteousness. The righteousness of Christ imputed to them, secures the soul, the better part, from death; the righteousness of Christ in them, the renewed image of God upon the soul, preserves it, and, by God's ordinance, at death elevates it, improves it, and makes it meet to partake of the inheritance of the saints in light. There is a life reserved for the body at last; He shall also quicken your mortal bodies, ver. 11, Though at death the

body is cast aside as a despised broken vessel, a vessel in which is no pleasure, yet God will have a desire to the work of his hands, Job 14. 15, will remember his covenant with the dust, and the body shall be reunited to the soul, and clothed with glory agreeable to it.

Two great assurances of the resurrection of the body are mentioned. 1. The resurrection of Christ: He that raised up Christ from the dead, shall also quicken. Christ rose as the Head and First-fruits, and Forerunner of all the saints, 1 Cor. 15. 20. O grave, then, where is thy victory? It is in virtue of Christ's resurrection that we shall rise again. 2. The indwelling of the Spirit. The same Spirit that raises the soul now, will raise the body shortly; by his Spirit that dwelleth in you. The bodies of the saints are the temples of the Holy Ghost, 1 Cor. 3. 16; 6. 19. Now though these temples may be suffered for a while to lie in ruins, yet they shall be rebuilt again. So that when the body drops into the dust, the soul, being perfectly delivered from sin, will enter heaven; and the Almighty God, who raised Jesus from the dead, will raise the mortal body also, incorruptible and glorious, by the almighty power of his indwelling Spirit, who will not finally leave his temple mouldering in the dust. Then sin and all its effects will be for ever done with.

From hence the apostle infers, how much it is our duty to walk, not after the flesh, but after the Spirit, ver. 12, 13. As death, and all misery originated from man's preferring his own inclinations to the will of God; and as all happiness is communicated by the renewal of the soul unto holiness; so Christians should not consider themselves debtors to the flesh, though it still lives and works in them. They have ruined themselves by complying with its suggestions, and they can owe it nothing now that Christ has rescued them from merited destruction. But thus we become debtors for an infinite amount to Christ and his grace. Our debt of sin was paid by the death of Christ on the cross for us, and being freely pardoned to us, becomes a debt of grateful love, and our past neglect and sin render us the more indispensably bound to do what we possibly can for his glory, the good of our brethren, and for our own souls.

16, indeed, any habitually live according

to corrupt lustings, they will certainly perish in their sins, whatever they profess; but if, through the influences of the Holy Spirit, and according to the tendency of the new nature, they deny their sinful lusts, and proceed to mortify the sinful affections which arise thence, they prove themselves alive to God, through Christ, and their spiritual life will abound, till perfected in eternal happiness. And what can a worldly life present to our view, worthy for a moment to be put in competition with this noble prize of our high calling? Let us then, by the Spirit, endeavour more and more entirely to mortify the flesh, and to repress all its actings.

The Spirit of adoption is another privilege belonging to those in Christ Jesus, ver. 14—16. Regeneration by the Holy Spirit communicates a new and divine life to the soul, though in a feeble state, as a new born babe. Believing in Christ we become the children of God by adoption also. Therefore, all those, and those only, who are led by the Spirit, are the children of God.

All that are Christ's are taken into the relation of children to God. They are led by the Spirit of God, led as rational creatures; drawn with the cords of a man, and the bands of love. It is the undoubted character of all true believers, that they are led by the Spirit of God. Having submitted themselves, by believing, to his guidance, they do in their obedience follow his conducting, and are sweetly led into all truth and all duty. Their privilege is, They are the sons of God; received into the number of God's children by adoption; owned and loved by him as his children. And those that are the sons of God, have the Spirit,—

1. To work in them the disposition of children, ver. 15; they have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear. Understand it, of that spirit of bondage which the Old Testament church was under, from the darkness and terror of that dispensation. The Spirit of adoption was not then plentifully poured out. Also of that spirit of bondage, under which many saints were at their conversion.

First of all, the Spirit of God, for the most part, works in a man a general faith as to the law and the threatenings thereof, and it is called the spirit of bondage to fear; because it causes in us a sense of our sins, an apprehension

of God's anger, fear of deserved condemnation, despair of ourselves, and in respect of ourselves. This being done, the same Spirit works in us another faith, called saving or justifying faith; and it apprehends or receives Christ with his benefits. Upon a thorough sense of our misery, there rises in the mind earnest meditation on the promise of mercy, and the benefits therein offered. Then follows a purpose, will, desire, and endeavour to believe, upon consideration of the commandment that bids us believe and apply the promise to ourselves. This shows itself by earnest and serious invocation, which is nothing but a flying from the condemning sentence of the law to the throne of grace for mercy. After this follows a settling and quieting of the mind concerning Christ and his benefits, upon assurance thereof wrought in the mind by the Spirit of God. Thus faith, apprehending Christ for our reconciliation with God, becomes a victorious conqueror against all our spiritual enemies, and the soul is delivered from the spirit of bondage, even in this life.—(56)

Though a child of God may come under fear of bondage again, and may question his sonship, yet the blessed Spirit is not a spirit of bondage, for then he would witness to an untruth. But you have received the Spirit of adoption. God alone when he adopts, can give a Spirit of adoption; can give the nature of children. The Spirit of adoption works in the children of God filial love to God as a Father, delight in him, and dependence upon him, as a Father. Whereby we cry, Abba, Father. Praying is here called crying; which is not only an earnest, but a natural expression of desire. The Spirit teaches us in prayer to come to God as a Father, with holy, humble confidence, emboldening the soul in that duty. Abba, Father. Abba is a Syriac word, signifying Father, or my Father. It denotes an affectionate endearing importunity, and a believing stress laid on the relation.

2. To witness to the relation of children, ver. 16. The former is the work of the Spirit as a Sanctifier, this as a Comforter. Beareth witness with our spirit. Many a man has the witness of his own spirit to the goodness of his state, who has not the concurring testimony of the Holy Spirit. Many speak peace to themselves, to whom the God of

heaven does not speak peace. But those who are sanctified, have God's Spirit witnessing with their spirits; not an immediate extraordinary revelation, but an ordinary work of the Spirit, in and by the means of his speaking peace to the soul. This testimony is agreeable to the written word, and is always grounded upon sanctification; for the Spirit in the heart cannot contradict the Spirit in the word. The Spirit witnesses the privileges of children to none who have not the nature and disposition of children.

As the adoption of sons entitles us to, so the disposition of sons prepares us for that glory, ver. 17. Children, then heirs. Heaven is an inheritance that all the saints are heirs to. They do not come to it as purchasers, by any merit or procuring of their own; but as heirs, only by the act of God. The saints are heirs, though their present state is a state of education and preparation for the inheritance. But the honour and happiness of an heir lies in the value and worth of that which he is heir to, and we have here an account of this. Heirs of God. God himself will be with them, and will be their God, Rev. 21. 3. Joint-heirs with Christ. Christ, as Mediator, is the heir of all things, Heb. 1. 2, and true believers, by virtue of their union with him, shall inherit all things, Rev. 21. 7. Those who now partake the Spirit of Christ as his brethren, shall as his brethren partake his glory, John 17. 24. This future glory is spoken of, as the reward of present sufferings; and it is a rich reward; if so be that we suffer with him, ver. 17. or, forasmuch as we suffer with him. The state of the church in this world always is, but was then especially, an afflicted state; to be a christian was certainly to be a sufferer. Now, to comfort them in reference to those sufferings, he tells them that they suffered with Christ, for his sake, for his honour, and for the testimony of a good conscience; and they shall be glorified with him. Though we may now seem to be losers for Christ, we shall not, we cannot, be losers by him in the end. The gospel is filled with the assurances of this. Then, giving up ourselves to be led by the Spirit, our adoption will be manifest, we shall be freed from servile motives and fears, and shall trust and obey God, walking with him as a reconciled Father. The Holy Spirit will wit-

ness with our consciences that we have the temper of loving obedient children towards him; supporting us in all trials with joyful prospects, and blessed anticipations of an incorruptible inheritance.

15. The word "Abba" is Syriac, and signifies Father. *Lamy* states that among the jews those who had been born of a slave could not use the title of Abba; it was the privilege only of such as had a right of inheritance.

16. "The Holy Spirit by his sanctifying grace on our hearts, confirms the testimony of our minds and consciences, that we are children of God."—*Bloomfield*.

Ver. 18—23. The apostle experienced an abundant measure of the sufferings of Christ, but found them not worthy to be compared with that glorious recompense which will be bestowed on the believer, or that glory which will be revealed to them, and accomplished in them. So that it would be the greatest folly to shrink from the pursuit of this promised happiness, through the dread of the most terrible of these passing sufferings. The sufferings of the saints are but sufferings of this present time, they strike no deeper than the things of time, last no longer than the present time, 2 Cor. 4. 17, light affliction, and but for a moment. In our present state we come short, not only in the enjoyment, but in the knowledge of future glory; it shall be revealed. It surpasses all that we have yet seen or known: present vouchsafements are very precious, very sweet; but there is something to come, that will outshine all: it shall be revealed in us; not only revealed to us, to be seen, but revealed in us, to be enjoyed. The sufferings are small and short, and concern the body only; but the glory is rich and great, and concerns the soul, and is eternal. This he reckons not a rash and sudden determination, but produced by a very serious and deliberate consideration. How vastly different are the sentence of the word and the sentiment of the world, concerning the sufferings of this present time! Paul was competent to judge this. He knew what were the sufferings of this present time, 2 Cor. 11. 23—28. He knew what the glory of heaven is, 2 Cor. 12. 3, 4. And upon the view of both, he gives this judgment. There is nothing like a believing view of the glory which shall be revealed, to support and bear up the spirit under all sufferings of this present time. The reproach of Christ appears

riches to those who have respect to the recompense of reward, Heb. 11. 26.

Indeed, the whole visible creation seems to wait with earnest expectation for the period when the children of God shall be manifested in the glory prepared for them, as a man looks out and waits with much longing for the arrival of a beloved and long expected friend, ver. 19.

The meaning of the passage seems to be, that the creation was subjected to the one great evil of being alienated and perverted from its original purpose—under the domination of the folly, the iniquity, and the treason of man—to ends foreign to its own proper nature and tendency—to ends that are worthless or wicked—that are either without God, or against him. And this was “not willingly:” the subjection to vanity was in perfect opposition to the original design and legitimate tendency of the creatures of God.—(65)

There is a present vanity, which the creature, by reason of the sin of man, is made subject to, ver. 20. When man sinned, the ground was cursed for man's sake, and with it all the creatures became subject to that curse; became mutable and mortal. Also under the bondage of corruption, ver. 21. There is an impurity, deformity, and infirmity, which the creature has contracted by the fall of man: the creation is sullied and stained, much of the beauty of the world is gone. There is an enmity of one creature to another; they are all subject to continual alteration and decay of individuals, and liable to God's judgments. And it is not the least part of the vanity and bondage, that they are used, or abused rather, by men as instruments of sin. The creatures are often abused to the dishonour of their Creator, the hurt of his children, or the service of his enemies. When the creatures are made the food and fuel of our lusts, they are subject to vanity, they are captivated by the law of sin. And this, not willingly, but for man's sin; by reason of him who hath subjected the same. When Adam, by sin, delivered himself into the bondage of corruption, he delivered them likewise; God did it judicially; he passed the sentence for the sin of man, by which they became subject. Yet this deplorable state of the creation is “in hope.” God will rescue it from its confused state, and deliver it from thus

being held in bondage to man's depravity, that it may partake of the glorious liberty of his children, and minister to it. They shall no more be subject to vanity and corruption, and the other fruits of the curse; but, on the contrary, this lower world shall be renewed: when there will be new heavens, there will be a new earth, 2 Pet. 3. 13; Rev. 21. 1. We thus are assured that the whole creation groans in every part, ver. 22, with anguish, expecting and impatiently longing for a glorious end to all these distractions. This it has done ever since the fall. The miseries of the human species, through their own and each other's wickedness, declare the world is not intended always to continue thus.

Even the children of God, who have the Spirit of adoption, and his holy consolations, as the first fruits and pledge of their everlasting happiness, ver. 23, yet groan within themselves, through manifold pains, conflicts, temptations, and difficulties; especially through the disquietude of indwelling sin, while waiting for the adoption, their public admission into the family of God, and to the enjoyment of their inheritance, at that season when their bodies also shall be redeemed from the grave, incorruptible, immortal, and glorious. It is our having received the first fruits of the Spirit, which quickens our desires, encourages our hopes, and raises our expectations. We groan within ourselves; which denotes a very earnest and importunate desire, the soul pained with the delay. The resurrection is here called the redemption of the body. It shall then be rescued from the power of death and the grave, and the bondage of corruption; and, though a vile body, yet it shall be refined and beautified, and made like the glorious body of Christ, Phil. 3. 21; 1 Cor. 15. 42. This is called the adoption. As Christ was, so the saints will be, declared to be the sons of God, by the resurrection from the dead. It is the adoption perfected and completed. The children of God have bodies as well as souls; and till those bodies are brought into the glorious liberty of the children of God, the adoption is not perfect. But then it will be complete, when the Captain of our salvation shall bring his many sons to glory, Heb. 2. 10. This is what we expect, what our flesh rests in hope of, Ps. 16. 9, 10,

We have here a most impressive, afflicting, and humbling view of the evil nature and dismal consequences of sin. It has been, and continues, the guilty cause of all the suffering that exists in the creation of God. It has engendered the woes of earth; it has kindled the flames of hell. As to man—not a tear has been shed, not a sigh has been heaved, not a groan has been uttered, not a pang has been felt of bodily pain or of mental distress, that has not had its origin in sin. Of the extent to which the sin of man has affected the brute creation, it may not be so easy to speak, but we know that all comes of sin that is endured by them from the hand of man. But this is not all. It is not only or chiefly as it affects the happiness of the creature, that sin is to be considered; but as it affects the glory of God. Of this how fearfully regardless are the bulk of mankind. It gives them no concern. Their hearts are under the full sway of the spirit of selfishness—they care not a rush for the honour of their Maker. How deep the guilt of sinners who are “subject to vanity willingly!” Their rebellion is with the full consent of the will and heart. Consider what a fearful state this is! Whether men are sensible of it or not, this is fearful guilt. Again, such a world as this passage brings before the eye of believing hope to the people of God, is not at all such a world as many desire. A world wherein dwelleth righteousness; where the fear and love of God bear sovereign rule, where will be found no scope for the gratification of the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eye, and the pride of life. They like the world better as it is; yet how often we hear such men express their hopes of going to heaven! To the character of the place, and the nature and sources of its joys, they never have given a fixed or serious thought. But to the man of the world, taken thither with an unchanged heart, heaven would be a place of distress. If we are not desiring and pursuing that which is to constitute the happiness of heaven, our hope of it must be a delusion. Let no man of the world speak of his hope of heaven.—(65.)

19. *T. H. Horne* says, the application of the parenthesis will render this very difficult passage perfectly easy. “The earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God, (for the creation was made subject

to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who subjected it,) in hope that the creation itself also shall be delivered,” &c.

—*Stuart* considers that the word rendered “creature” in this and the following verses, means men, mankind in general. He considers the apostle’s meaning to be in substance this,—“The very nature and condition of the human race point to a future state; they declare that this is an imperfect, frail, dying, unhappy state; that man does not, and cannot attain the end of his being here; and even christians, supported as they are by the earnest of future glory, still find themselves obliged to sympathize with all others in these sufferings, sorrows, and deferred hopes.” The passage is a very difficult one, and various interpretations have been given. *Stuart* urges his view at considerable length, and the subject cannot be passed without notice, but the greater part of the commentators of weight, both ancient and modern, prefer the sense given in the comment. *Doddridge* objects to considering it as chiefly referring to the brute or inanimate creation, since the day of the redemption of our bodies will put an end to them. He refers it to the whole unevangelized world, though few saw so much of their misery as actually to desire the remedy, as looking out with eager expectation for such a remedy and relief as the gospel brings, by the prevalence of which human nature would be redeemed from vanity and corruption, and inferior creatures from tyranny and abuse.

—*Wardlaw* adopts the view that “the animate and inanimate creation more generally, in as far as connected with the globe in which we dwell, the vanity of apostate men,” are to be understood here. He considers this is liable to the fewest and least weighty objections, and as full of the sublime and most delightful interest to the believing anticipations both of benevolence and piety. He would render the original term throughout by the same word “creation.”

20. *Lightfoot* considers that the word rendered “vanity,” does not so much denote the vanishing condition of the outward state, as the inward vanity and emptiness of the mind. As chap. I. 21, “they became vain in their imaginations.” Some expositors think that “in hope” should be made the beginning of ver. 21. *Jayne* is of this opinion, and would read the rest of ver. 20, as a parenthesis.

23. Adoption, as practised among the Romans, seems here alluded to. It was a solemn ceremony by which the adopted person was publicly recognised as the son of the adopter.

Ver. 24—27. Believers have been brought into a state of safety; but their comfort consists rather in hope than in enjoyment. Now what is actually possessed and enjoyed, cannot properly be called hope, for how can a man properly be said to hope to see or possess, what he at present beholds and enjoys?

The future happiness of the saints will mainly consist in beholding the glory of God. Some glimpses of this they here see by faith, as in a glass darkly. For this full enjoyment of his glory they hope and wait in reliance on his promise,

and in patient continuance in well doing, amidst manifold trials and temptations; and from this hope they cannot be diverted by the vain expectation of finding satisfaction in the things of time and sense. In hoping for this glory, we need patience, our way is rough and long; but He that shall come, will come, and will not tarry; though he seem to tarry, it becomes us to wait for him, ver. 25.

For though the infirmities of Christians are many and great, so that they would soon be overpowered if left to themselves, yet the Holy Spirit supports them, ver. 26. As their strength and comfort amidst conflicts must be obtained by prayer, and as they are so ignorant, forgetful and unbelieving, that they know not how to ask for any thing aright, the same Spirit helps their memories, excites their desires and hopes, and increases their faith. The Spirit itself makes intercession for us; Christ intercedes for us in heaven, the Spirit intercedes for us in our hearts. The Spirit, as an enlightening Spirit, teaches us what to pray for: as a sanctifying Spirit, works and excites praying graces; as a comforting Spirit, silences our fears, and helps us over all our discouragements. The Holy Spirit is the spring of all desires and breathings toward God. Thus he becomes an inward intercessor. These prayers consist of deep acquaintance with our own wants and miseries, earnest longings after spiritual blessings, and believing expectations of them, more than words can express.

Perhaps the humble, broken-hearted suppliant, when thus groaning out his desires after pardon and deliverance from sin, is ashamed to offer such imperfect requests; but the heart-searching God well understands this language, which expresses the mind of the Spirit when making intercession for the saints in whom he dwells. This is according to the will of God in his promise, commandment, and providence, ver. 27. and such prayers will surely be answered. The Spirit in the heart never contradicts the Spirit in the word. Those desires that are contrary to the will of God, do not come from the Spirit. The Spirit interceding in us, evermore melts our wills into the will of God. Not as I will, but as thou wilt. To a sincere Christian, who makes heart-work of his duty, nothing is more comfortable than that God searches the heart, for then he will hear

and answer those desires which we want words to express. He knows what we have need of before we ask, Matt. 6. 8. As he always hears the Son interceding for us, so he always hears the Spirit interceding in us, because his intercession is according to the will of God.

When the Holy Spirit produces this state of the judgment and affections, the prayers which spring from it will be graciously accepted, through our heavenly Advocate, by the heart-searching, heart-knowing God.—(100.)

Thus the Spirit of God will help us under our infirmities to support our trials; and we shall, by his effectual teaching and aid, pray to our heavenly Father, with large and spiritual desires after his salvation, so as to ensure a gracious answer, and supplies of every needful blessing.

But is not something more intended here? Does not the interceding or strong complaining here mentioned, rather require us to understand, not what we ourselves are by the Spirit enabled to do; but the act of the Spirit himself, coming in aid of our imperfect conceptions, our confused, ill-ordered, and often ill-timed and mistaken prayers. In many cases we neither see our danger, nor know the help necessary for our safety; nor are capable of understanding the full extent of our wants.—Here a better wisdom offers up the powerful request, according to the will of God. How often again when the occasion is most urgent for our imploring the speedy help of God, are we lost and wanting to ourselves. Perhaps we have been surprised by the enemy: perhaps the flesh has prevailed so as to shut up the mind to fervent prayer; or it may be a delusion prevails; so that the mind either suspects no foe, or is embracing some dangerous error as an imaginary blessing. How little was Peter in a condition to pray for himself in that night when he denied his Master. But He, who then sustained the office of Comforter, saw the enemy coming and prayed for Peter. What wonder then, if that other Comforter, who now unseen resides in the hearts of the faithful, should, in similar circumstances, in like manner help our infirmities. He, the indwelling Spirit, in these sad hours of darkness, can yet perceive the desires and wishes of the spiritual, the hidden man of the heart, even when the believer himself, through

the violence of temptation, is deprived of all proper reflections, or is silent in prayer. Even then the Spirit who searcheth the hearts, can perceive the mind and will of the spirit, the renewed mind, and himself advocates his cause. The Spirit itself complains and makes intercession for him to God, and the enemy prevails not; the accuser of the brethren is cast down.—(25.)

• 26. "Hilpeth" *Doddridge* says it literally expresses the action of one who helps another to bear a burden, by taking hold of it and lifting or bearing it with him. So it seems to intimate the obligation on us to exert our little strength, feeble as it is, in concurrence with the Almighty aid.

Ver. 28—31. It might be objected, that, notwithstanding all these privileges, we see believers compassed about with manifold afflictions. Though the Spirit makes intercession for them, yet their troubles are continued. It is very true; but in this the Spirit's intercession is always effectual, so that all this is working together for their good. Observe, 1. The character of the saints, who are interested in this privilege. They love God. It is our love to God that makes every providence sweet and profitable. Those that love God, make the best of all he does. They are the called according to his purpose; the call is effectual, not according to any merit of ours, but according to God's own gracious purpose. 2. The privilege of the saints, that all things work together for good to them. All the providences of God are theirs; merciful providences, afflicting providences, personal, public; all are for good: perhaps for temporal good, as Joseph's troubles; certainly for spiritual and eternal good. That is good for them which does their souls good. Either directly or indirectly, every providence has a tendency to the spiritual good of those that love God; breaking them off from sin, bringing them nearer to God, weaning them from the world, fitting them for heaven. They work together, all concurring to answer the intention, for good; from the power and grace of God working in, with, and by these providences. The sins indeed of true believers are not always overruled for their increase of present grace or future glory; in this respect they suffer loss, and are saved as by fire. When they act out of character, corrections will be employed to bring them back again. If a man

allows himself in sin, expecting to derive good from it, he sins that grace may abound, he bears the mark of a hypocrite, and his damnation will be just. All this we know; know it for a certainty, from the word of God, from our own experience, and from the experience of all the saints. And we need not weaken this encouraging assurance to guard it from perversion. These precious privileges are conveyed to us by the covenant, but they are founded in the counsel of God, which infallibly secures the event.

Here is the order of the causes of our salvation, a golden chain, which cannot be broken. There are four links.

I. "Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son," ver. 29. All that God designed for glory and happiness as the end, he decreed to grace and holiness as the way. These persons once did not love God, but they had been called into a state of reconciliation and love to him, according to his purpose, which he never will suffer to be frustrated. The whole human race were deserving of destruction and meet for it; but for reasons not perfectly known to us, God determined to recover some by regeneration and the power of his grace. These he foreknew as chosen, each of them, to eternal life. In consequence of this foreknowledge he predestinated, or before decreed, that they should be conformed to the image of his Son. Holiness consists in our conformity to the image of Christ. That takes in the whole of sanctification, of which Christ is the great Pattern and Exemplar. To be of the same spirit as Christ was, to walk and live as Christ did, to bear our sufferings patiently as Christ did. Christ is the express image of his Father, and the saints are conformed to the image of Christ. Thus it is by the mediation and interposal of Christ, that we have God's love restored to us, and God's likeness renewed upon us, in which two things consist the happiness of man. All that God has from eternity foreknown with favour, he has predestinated to this conformity. It is a mere cavil to call the doctrine of election, licentious doctrine; and to argue, that it gives encouragement to sin, as if the end were separated from the way, and happiness from holiness. None can know their election but by their conformity to the image of Christ; for all that are chosen

are chosen to sanctification, 2 Thess. 2. 13.

Herein is designed the honour of Jesus Christ, that he might be the First-born among many brethren. The first-born was the head of the family, on whom all the rest depended. And blessed be God, though they seem few in one place, at one time, yet, when they come all together, they will be a great many. Had the event been left at uncertainties in the Divine counsels, to depend upon the contingent turn of man's will, Christ might have been the first-born among but few or no brethren; a captain without soldiers, and a prince without subjects. But to secure to him many brethren, there is a remnant predestinated to be conformed to his image; which decree will certainly have its accomplishment in the holiness and happiness of that chosen race; and in spite of all the opposition of the powers of darkness, Christ will be the First-born among very many brethren. In this life they are in part renewed to his holy image, and walk in his steps; and having passed, like Jesus, through many sufferings, they will hereafter be completely conformed to his holy human nature.

II. "Whom he did predestinate, them he also called," ver. 30. All that God from eternity predestinated to grace and glory, he does, in the fulness of time, effectually call. The call is effectual, when we come at the call; and we come at the call, when the Spirit draws us, convinces the conscience of guilt and wrath, enlightens the understanding, bows the will, persuades and enables us to embrace Christ in the promises, makes us willing in the day of his power. It is an effectual call from self and earth, to God and Christ, and heaven, as our end; from sin and vanity, to grace and holiness and seriousness, as our way. This is the gospel call. Those he called, that the purpose of God, according to election, might stand; we are called to that to which we were chosen. So that the only way to make our election sure, is, to make sure our calling, 2 Pet. 1. 10. The love of God, ruling in the hearts of those who once were enmity to him, proves that they have been called according to his purpose, in order to be conformed to the image of his Son, and made meet as his brethren to be joint heirs with him.

III. "Whom he called, them he also

justified." All that are effectually called, are justified; absolved from guilt, and accepted as righteous through Jesus Christ. No sin they have committed shall come against them, to condemn them. Blessed is the man whose iniquity is thus forgiven. None are thus justified but those that are effectually called. Those who stand out against the gospel call, abide under guilt and wrath.

IV. "Whom he justified, them he also glorified." The power of corruption being broken in effectual calling, and the guilt of sin removed in justification, all that hinders is taken out of the way, and nothing can come between that soul and glory. Observe, it is spoken of as a thing done, He glorified, because of the certainty of it; He hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling. In the eternal glorification of all the elect, God's design of love to bring them to heaven has its full accomplishment. Nothing less than that glory would make up the fulness of his covenant-relation to them as God; therefore in all he does for them, and in them, he has this in view. Are they chosen? It is to salvation. Called? It is to his kingdom and glory. Begotten again? It is to an inheritance incorruptible. Afflicted? It is to work for them this exceeding and eternal weight of glory. Observe, the Author of all these is the same. It is God himself that predestinated, calleth, justifieth, glorifieth. Created wills are so feeble, and created powers so very feeble, that if any of these depended upon the creature, the whole would shake. But God himself hath undertaken the doing of it from first to last, that we might abide in constant dependence upon him and subjection to him, and ascribe all the praise to him. This is a mighty encouragement to our faith and hope; for, as for God, his way, his work, is perfect; he that hath laid the foundation, will build upon it; the top-stone will at length be brought forth, and it will be our eternal work to cry, Grace, grace to it.

What shall we then say to these things? ver. 31. What use shall we make of what has been said? The apostle speaks as one amazed, and swallowed up in contemplation and admiration, wondering at the height and depth, and length and breadth, of the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge. The more we know of other things, the less we

wonder at them; but the further we are led into acquaintance with gospel mysteries, the more we are affected with admiration of them. If God be for us, who can be against us? It includes all, that God is for us; not only reconciled to us, and so not against us, but in covenant with us, and so engaged for us: all his attributes for us, his promises for us, all that he is, and has, and does, is for his people. He performs all things for them. He is for them, even when he seems to act against them.

And if so, who can be against us, so as to prevail against us, so as to hinder our happiness? Be they ever so great and strong, ever so many, ever so mighty, ever so malicious, what can they do? While God is for us, and we keep in his love, we may with a holy boldness defy all the powers of darkness. Let Satan do his worst, he is chained; let the world do its worst, it is conquered; principalities and powers are disarmed, and triumphed over, in the cross of Christ.

29 The connexion between election and holiness is very remarkable. They always go together in scripture. One can scarcely recollect a passage which speaks of election, that does not also speak of holiness.—*Müher*

33. Even if this were the only passage in which this subject was expressly mentioned, we might confidently maintain, that the doctrine of individual predestination to eternal life, and the authority of the apostle as an inspired writer, must stand and fall together. Nothing more fully shows this, than the difficulties to which its very learned and sagacious opposers are reduced; and the different and discordant grounds on which they rest their cause; for they scarcely agree in any thing but in determining to oppose the most natural and obvious meaning of the words.—*T. Scott*

31 The doctrines of the British Reformers on this subject are expressed in the seventeenth article. Of Predestination and Election:

Predestination to life is the everlasting purpose of God, whereby (before the foundations of the world were laid) he hath constantly decreed by his counsel, secret to us, to deliver from curse and damnation those whom he hath chosen in Christ out of mankind, and to bring them by Christ to everlasting salvation, as vessels made to honour. Wherefore they which be endued with so excellent a benefit of God, be called according to God's purpose, by his Spirit working in due season. They through grace obey the calling: they be justified freely: they be made sons of God by adoption. they be made like the image of his only begotten Son Jesus Christ. They walk religiously in good works, and at length, by God's mercy, they attain to everlasting felicity.

As the godly consideration of predestination, and our election in Christ, is full of sweet, pleasant, and unspeakable comfort to godly persons, and such as feel in themselves the working of the Spirit of Christ, mortifying the works of the flesh, and their earthly members, and drawing up their mind to high and heavenly things,

as well because it doth greatly establish and confirm their faith of eternal salvation, to be enjoyed through Christ, as because it doth fervently kindle their love towards God: So, for curious and carnal persons, lacking the Spirit of Christ, to have continually before their eyes the sentence of God's predestination, is a most dangerous downfall, whereby the devil doth thrust them either into desperation, or into wretchedness of unclean living, no less perilous than desperation.

Furthermore, we must receive God's promises in such wise as they be generally set forth to us in Holy Scripture. And in our doings, that will of God is to be followed, which we have expressly declared unto us in the word of God.

Ver. 32—34. Observe on what our hopes are built, ver. 32. God spared not his own Son. When he was to undertake our salvation, the Father was willing to part with him, did not think him too precious to bestow for the salvation of poor souls. Now we may know that he loves us, in that he hath not withheld his Son, his own Son, his only Son, from us, as he said, of Abraham, Gen. 22. 12. If nothing less will save man, rather than man shall perish, let him go, though it were out of his own bosom! Thus did he deliver him up for us all, for all the elect, for us all; not only for our good, but in our stead, as a Sacrifice or Atonement to be a propitiation for sin. When he had undertaken it, he did not spare him. Though he were his own Son, yet, being made sin for us, it pleased the Lord to bruise him. He did not spare him in the least, but charged it home. Awake, O sword. He did not spare his own Son that served him, that he might spare us, though we have done him so much disservice! We may therefore expect he will, with him, freely give us all things. It is implied, that he will give us Christ, for other things are bestowed with him; not only with him given for us, but with him given to us. He will with him freely give us all things, all things that he sees to be needful and necessary for us; all good things, and more we would not desire. Ps. 34. 10. And Infinite Wisdom shall be the Judge, whether it is good for us, and needful for us, or not. Freely give; freely, without reluctance; he is ready to give, meets us with his favours, freely, without recompense, without money, without price.

All things whatsoever, in heaven and earth, the universal creation, yea, the everlasting enjoyment of the Creator himself as their portion, are not so great a display of God's free love to them, as the gift

of his coequal Son to be the atonement on the cross for their sins; and all the rest necessarily follows upon their union with him, and interest in him, upon God's giving his own Son to take our nature for such a purpose.

The "all things," here mentioned, reach to an overwhelming amount. They are undeniably all and singular, without exception, the possessions, advantages, privileges, and blessings of every kind, which can be the causes or means of any real good to the faithful christian. All that is useful, great, and excellent, in the present state and to eternity, 1 Cor. 3. 22. Mighty total! Can imagination grasp it? Yet the unutterable donation is represented as small, and scarcely to be considered in comparison with God's gift of his own Son! It plainly tells us, that to bestow the universe would be a lower act of munificence, a less demonstration of the kindness of the Infinite Being, than his having given his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him may not perish, but may have eternal life. What then must be the dignity of the Son of God!—(95.)

How shall he not? Can it be imagined that he should do the greater, and not do the less? And that he should give so great a gift for us when we were enemies, and should deny us any good thing, now that, through him, we are friends and children? Thus may we, by faith, argue against our fears of want. He that hath prepared a crown and kingdom for us, will be sure to give us what we need in the way to it. He that designs us for the inheritance of sons when we come to the fitting time, will not let us want necessities in the mean time.

We have an answer ready to all accusations, and a security against all condemnations; ver. 33, Who shall lay any thing? Does the law accuse them? Do their own consciences accuse them? Is the devil the accuser of the brethren, accusing them before our God day and night? Here is enough to answer all those accusations, It is God that justifieth. Men may justify themselves, as the pharisees, and yet the accusations may be in full force against them; but if God justifies, that answers all. He is the Judge, the King, the party offended; his judgment is according to truth, and sooner or later all the world will be brought to be of his mind: so

that we may challenge all our accusers to come and put in their charge. This overthrows them all; it is God, the righteous faithful God, that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? ver. 34. Though accusers cannot make good the charge, yet they will be ready to condemn; but we have a plea ready which cannot be overruled. By virtue of our interest in Christ, our relation to him, and our union with him, we are thus secured. 1. His death; it is Christ that died. By the merit of his death he paid our debt. It is Christ, an able, all-sufficient Saviour. 2. His resurrection; Yea, rather that is risen again. This is much greater encouragement, for it is convincing evidence that Divine justice was satisfied by the merit of his death. His resurrection was a full discharge. Therefore the apostle mentions it with a "yea, rather." If He had died, and not risen again, we had been where we were. 3. Christ sitting at the right hand of God; He is even at the right hand of God. A further evidence that he had done his work, and a mighty encouragement to us in reference to all accusations, that we have such a Friend at the right hand of God; which denotes, that he is ready there, always at hand, and that he is ruling there; all power is given to him. Their Friend is himself the Judge, the same Person who loved them, died for their sins, and rose again for their justification. 4. The intercession which he makes there. He is there, not unconcerned about us, not forgetful of us, but making intercession. He is there an Advocate for us, to answer all accusations, to appear for us, and to present our petitions, to plead in behalf of his people, and to exert his almighty power for their benefit. And is not this abundant matter for comfort? What shall we say to these things? Is this the manner of men, O Lord God? What room is left for doubting and disquiet? Why art thou cast down, O my soul? To all the hard censures, the malicious calumnies, and the unjust and unrighteous sentences of devils or of men, we may with comfort oppose our justification before God through Christ Jesus, as that which abundantly countervails 1 Cor. 4. 3, 4. Even now he present' their services for acceptance before his Father's throne; he stops all accusations brought against them, he defeats

the machinations of their enemies ; he manages all things for their good, and is perfecting his work in them ; and will he then forsake the work of his own hands, and at last condemn them to hell ? It is impossible.

It is not uncommon for souls to entangle and perplex themselves, and to drive themselves from the comfort they are seeking after, by the measures and marks of grace they set to themselves, as their rule and standard. To such say, Are you in a willing league with any known sin ? Would you willingly, if you might be saved in that way, give yourself up to ungodliness, and not desire to follow Jesus Christ in the way of holiness ? If so, there is not any thing as yet to be said for your comfort ; only there is salvation provided, and the door is yet open, and your heart may be changed. But are your desires after Christ to be righteousness and sanctification to you ? Would you then willingly give yourself up to be ruled by him ? Had you rather suffer the greatest affliction for his sake, than commit the least sin to displease him ? Do you account him your treasure ? Does your soul say within you, O that he were mine ! and O that I were his ; that I could please him and live to him ! Then do not toss your spirit, and perplex your thoughts in fruitless, endless doubtings, but close with this as your portion, and be of good comfort ; your sins are, or will be forgiven. There is warrant for you to believe and lay hold on the righteousness here held forth, that you may find these things in you and find comfort in them. You are convinced of ungodliness ; then believe on him who justifies the ungodly. You are condemned, yet Christ is dead and risen. Flee to him as such, as the Lamb slain, as he who was dead, and is alive.—(88)

33. Or, Is it God ? What he who himself justifieth ?

34. Is it the Lord Jesus Christ ? What ! doth he condemn, who hath died to expiate our guilt, and to rescue us from condemnation ?—*Harris.* See *Doddridge*.

Ver. 35—39. The fears of the saints, lest they should lose their hold of Christ, often discourage and disquiet : but here is what may silence their fears, and still such storms—that nothing can separate them ! We have here a challenge to all the enemies of the saints, to separate them, if

they could, from the love of Christ. God having manifested his love in giving his own Son for us, and not hesitating at that, can we imagine that any thing else should divert or dissolve that love ? As infinite unchangeable Power and Love are engaged in behalf of all believers, who shall separate them from the love of Christ ? Observe here the present calamities of Christ's beloved ones. They meet with tribulations, are in distress, know not which way to look for succour and relief in this world, are followed with persecution from an angry, malicious world, that always hated those whom Christ loved ; pinched with famine, and starved with nakedness, when stripped of all creature-comforts ; exposed to the greatest perils ; often bathed in their blood. Can a case be supposed more black and dismal ? It is illustrated, ver. 36, by Ps. 44. 22. The Old Testament saints had the same lot ; killed all the day long, continually exposed to, and expecting the fatal stroke. There is still every day, and all the day long, one or other of the people of God bleeding and dying under the rage of persecuting enemies, accounted as sheep for the slaughter.

See the inability of all these things to separate us from the love of Christ. Shall they, can they do it ? No, by no means. All this will not sever the bond of love and friendship betwixt Christ and true believers. Christ doth not, will not love us the less for all this. All these troubles are very consistent with the strong and constant love of the Lord Jesus. They are neither a cause nor an evidence of the abatement of his love. Whatever persecuting enemies may rob us of, they cannot rob us of the love of Christ ; they cannot interrupt or exclude his presence ; therefore let them do their worst, they cannot make a true believer miserable. We do not, will not love him the less for this, because we do not think he loves us the less. A true christian loves Christ never the less, though he suffer for him ; thinks not the worse of Christ, though he lose all for him.

Notice the triumph of believers, ver. 37. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors. Thus Christ triumphed over principalities and powers in his cross. By faith and patience, is a surer and a nobler way of conquest than by fire and sword. Those are more than conquerors,

that conquer with little loss. Many conquests are dearly bought; but what do the suffering saints lose? They lose that which the gold loses in the furnace,—the dross only. It is no great loss to lose things which are not; a body that is of the earth, earthly. They obtain great gain—glory, honour, and peace, a crown of righteousness that fades not away. In this the suffering saints have triumphed, enjoyed more of the love of Christ. Those that have gone smiling to the stake, and stood singing in the flames; these were more than conquerors. It is only through Christ that loved us; his death taking the sting out of all these troubles; his grace strengthening us, and enabling us to bear them with holy courage and constancy, and coming in with special comforts and supports. Thus are we conquerors, not in our own strength, but in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. He hath overcome the world for us, John 16. 33, both the good things and the evil things of it.

In conclusion, all those things which might be supposed likely to separate between Christ and believers, are enumerated, ver. 38. 39. Neither death nor life; neither terrors of death on the one hand, nor comforts and pleasures of life on the other; neither fear of death, nor hope of life. We shall not be separated from that love, either in death or in life. Nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers. The good angels will not, the bad shall not: and neither can. The good angels are engaged friends, the bad angels all are restrained enemies. Nor things present, nor things to come: neither the sense of troubles present, nor the fear of troubles to come. Time shall not separate us, eternity shall not. Things present separate us from things to come, and things to come separate and cut us off from things present; but neither from the love of Christ, whose favour is both with present things, and things to come. Nor height, nor depth; neither the height of prosperity and preferment, nor the depth of adversity and disgrace; nothing from heaven above, nothing on earth below. Nor any other creature: not any thing that can be named or thought of. It will not, it cannot separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. It cannot cut off or impair our love to God, or God's to us; nothing does it, nor can do it, but sin, Ob-

serve, the love that is between God and true believers, is through Christ. He is the Mediator of our love; it is in and through him that God can love us, and that we dare to love God. That is the ground of the steadfastness of the love; therefore God rests in his love, because Jesus Christ, in whom he loves us, is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

Mere professed believers, in such circumstances often forsake God and perish, but all his saints are in his hand, and are kept by his power through faith unto salvation. If any one can pervert such assurances into encouragements to sin, he has no part in them. We must not take the cordials from the weary and almost fainting combatants, because others unwarrantably seize them, and would intoxicate themselves therewith.

What can separate us from the love of Him who bled on the cross for us, when we were so guilty and depraved that we deserved nothing but hell? While therefore we rejoice in these privileges and in this security, and cheerfully expect to be more than conquerors in every conflict, and gainers by every loss, till death is swallowed up in victory, let us show the holiness of the doctrine by sparing no lust, shrinking from no hardship or cost in the cause of Christ, willingly enduring our cross, obeying his commandments, and being steadfast, unmovable, and always abounding in his work, as knowing that our labour is not in vain in the Lord.

Whatsoever they may be separated from, though the things or persons dearest in this world, it is no matter enough remains. None can take Christ from the believer; he is safe in him as his purchase. None can take the believer from Him, being still in his love, and through Him in the Father's love, that is sufficient. The believer may say, What then can I fear? What can I want? All other hazards signify nothing. Alas, poor sinners, though you abound with the possessions of this world, what vain things are they! Can you say of any of them, Who shall separate us? Storms may arise and scatter ships that sail smoothly together in fair weather. You may be removed by public commotions and calamities from pleasant dwellings and societies, and estates. You may even live to see and seek your parting. At last you must part, for you must die!

Then farewell parks and palaces, gardens and honours, and even crowns themselves! Then, dearest friends, children, and wife must be parted with. And what hast thou left, poor soul, who hast not Christ, but that which thou wouldest gladly part with, and canst not—the condemning guilt of all thy sins! But the soul that is in Christ, when other things are pulled away, feels little or nothing: he cleaves to Christ, and these separations pain him not. Yea, when that great separatist death comes, that breaks all other unions, even that of the soul and body, yet so far is it from separating the believer's soul from its beloved Lord Jesus, that, on the contrary, it carries it into the nearest union with him, and the fullest enjoyment of him for ever.—(88.)

39. The latter part of this chapter, from ver. 31, contains a description, in most forcible and glowing expressions, of the privileges, the hopes, and the temper of a true christian, and shows what magnanimity and greatness of sentiment the gospel infuses into those who understand and believe its doctrines. It is, therefore, a most proper conclusion of a discourse in which, by the strongest reasoning, practices are recommended, which ennoble the human mind, yield the greatest and most permanent joys, and prepare men for becoming the companions of angels, and for living with God himself, through all eternity.—*Macknight.*

CHAPTER IX.

The apostle expresses the deep concern of his heart, that the generality of his countrymen were strangers to the great blessings of the gospel, ver. 1—5. Shows that the promises given to the fathers, are, nevertheless, made good to the spiritual seed of Abraham, to the end that the purpose of God might stand, 6—13. Answers objections against God's sovereign conduct, in exercising mercy towards these, and justice towards the carnal Israelites, 14—24. Shows that this sovereignty runs through God's dealings both with jews and gentiles, 25—29. And that there is no reason to complain of the gentiles attaining righteousness, for justification through faith, since the falling short of the jews is owing to their not seeking it in that way, but by the works of the law, 30—33.

Ver. 1—5. The apostle, having plainly asserted, and largely proved, that justification and salvation are to be had by faith only, and not by the works of the law: by Christ, and not by Moses; in this and the following chapters, anticipates an objection which might be made.

If this be so, what becomes of the jews, as a body; especially those that do not embrace Christ, nor believe the gospel? By this rule they must come short of happiness; and then, what becomes of the promise made to the fathers, which entailed salvation upon the jews? Would not that promise then be nullified and made of none effect? which is not a thing to be imagined concerning any word of God. That doctrine therefore, would they say, is not to be embraced, from which such a consequence as this flows. The consequence of the rejection of the unbelieving jews, Paul grants; but he denies, that from thence it follows, that the word of God takes no effect, and proves this in the rest of the chapter.

This discourse is introduced with a tender and affectionate profession, that they might not think he triumphed or insulted over the rejected jews, or was pleased with the calamities that were coming upon them. Being therefore about to discuss the rejection of the jews and the calling of the gentiles more fully, and to resolve the whole into the sovereign electing love of God, the apostle expresses, very strongly, his cordial affection for his people. He solemnly appeals to Christ; and his conscience, enlightened and directed by the Holy Spirit, bore witness to his sincerity. Having made this solemn protestation, he declared that the unbelief and rejection of the jews deeply grieved him. He would willingly submit to be treated as an anathema, or "accursed," after the manner of Christ, or to be cast out from the visible church, disgraced, crucified; and even for a time be shut out from the comfort of communion with his Saviour, and in the deepest horror and distress of mind; if by any personal sufferings of his own, he could rescue his nation from the destruction about to come upon them for their obstinate unbelief.

As though the apostle said, I could even wish this, if it would make so great a multitude happy.—I could even wish so great a blessing to my brethren, though with the loss of my own happiness.—(39.)

They were the descendants of Israel, who wrestled with God and prevailed; they had long been professed worshippers of Jehovah, to whom the typical adoption pertained. The covenants made with Abraham, David, and others, the law and the national covenant which

was grounded thereon, belonged to them. These were peculiar honours and also advantages. The temple worship was typical of salvation by the Messiah, and the means of communion with God. All the promises concerning Christ and his salvation were given to them. They were honourable in having descended from the patriarchs; and finally, the Messiah, at the appointed time, was born of one of their nation; even He who is also God over all creatures, blessed and praised throughout all worlds and to all eternity. The expression, "concerning the flesh," implies that Christ had a higher and nobler nature than that of man; and proves that the apostle here decidedly attests the Godhead of Christ, as One with the Father. As to his Divine nature, he is the Lord from heaven; but as to his human nature, he is of the seed of Abraham. This was the great privilege of the jews, that Christ was of kin to them. He is over all, God blessed for ever. Lest the jews should think meanly of him, because he was of their alliance, the apostle here speaks thus honourably concerning him: and it is a very full proof of the Godhead of Christ. He is not only over all, as Mediator, but He is God blessed for ever. Therefore, how much sorer punishment were they worthy of, that rejected him! It was likewise the honour of the jews, that, seeing "God blessed for ever" would be a man, he would be a jew; and, considering the posture and character of that people, at that time, it may well be looked upon as a part of his humiliation.

The sorrow and anguish springing from natural affection, when we mourn for obstinate transgressors, will not prevent us from rejoicing in Christ, while they are active principles, exciting us to use proper means for the conversion of those around us, and to submit to loss or suffering in our endeavours for their good. To be inescapable to the eternal condition of our fellow-creatures, is contrary both to the love required by the law, and the mercy of the gospel. No outward forms or notions, nor intercourse with saints, can profit such as have not in them the power of godliness. If related to Christ himself according to the flesh, it would not profit, unless we worshipped and obeyed him as God over all, blessed for ever.

1. Conscience is the voice of God in man; or at least, the faculty on which the influence of

the Spirit of God seems to be specially exerted. It was a conscience moved and enlightened by this Spirit, which the apostle here solemnly declares, testified his affectionate regard for the Jewish nation.—*Stuart*.

3. "To be devoted to destruction by Christ." He was ready to do and suffer any thing whatever, provided their salvation might be secured by it.—*Stuart*.

—To curse and to excommunicate, were equivalent terms among the jews, and the condition of those under excommunication was the most deplorable that could be imagined. They were excluded from all rights and privileges, debarred from all social intercourse, and excluded from the temple and synagogues.—*T. H. Horne*. The sense meant to be expressed by the apostle, seems to be as follows: "I am ready to make any possible sacrifice, however great, that may be lawful, in order to prevent the rejection of my brethren and countrymen, and to accomplish their deliverance."—*Bloomfield*.

4. *J. P. Smith* fully shows that this text cannot be understood in any other sense than that in which christians of all ages have generally taken it—namely, the attributing to the Messiah of a superior nature, besides that in which he was descended from "the Hebrew fathers," a nature to which the highest denomination and the universal dominion and honour of the Deity properly belong: "over all, God blessed for ever." *Michaelis* observes that the phrase "Blessed for ever" was used by the jews as an exclusively appropriated designation of the supreme and true God. And that there can be no doubt but that St. Paul here delivers the same doctrine of the divinity of Christ, which is elsewhere unquestionably maintained in the New Testament.

Ver. 6—13. The rejection of the jews, by the establishment of the gospel dispensation, did not invalidate the word of God's promise to the patriarchs. The promises and threatenings shall have their accomplishment. This is to be understood, especially of the promise of God, which by subsequent providences may be very doubtful to a wavering faith; but it is not, it cannot be made of no effect. When God said, he would be a God to Abraham, and to his seed, it was not meant of all his seed according to the flesh; but this proposition is laid down that they are not all Israel, which are of Israel, ver. 6. Many of the people named Israel, were very far from being Israelites indeed, and interested in the saving benefits of the new covenant. All are not really Israel, that are so in name and profession. It does not follow, that because they are the seed of Abraham, they must needs be the children of God; though they themselves fancied so, boasted much of, and built much upon their relation to Abraham. Grace does not run in the blood, nor are saving benefits inseparably

annexed to outward church privileges: though it is common for people thus to stretch the meaning of God's promise, in a vain hope. This is proved by instances; not only that some of Abraham's seed were chosen, and others not, but that God therein wrought according to the counsel of his own will.

1. The case of Isaac and Ishmael, both of them the seed of Abraham, is specified, ver. 7—9. Isaac only taken into covenant with God; Ishmael rejected and cast out. And yet the word which God had spoken, that he would be a God to Abraham and to his seed, did not therefore fall to the ground; for the blessings in that great word, being communicated by God as a benefactor, he was free to determine on what heads they should rest. God intended to teach us by this dispensation, that the children of the flesh, as such, by virtue of their relation to Abraham according to the flesh, are not therefore the children of God, as is proved by the rejection of Ishmael. This remark came home to the unbelieving jews, who boasted of their relation to Abraham according to the flesh, and looked for justification by those carnal ordinances which Christ had abolished. Ishmael was a child of the flesh, conceived by Hagar, who was likely to have children; there was nothing extraordinary or supernatural in his case, as there was in Isaac's; he was born after the flesh, Gal. 4. 29, representing those that expect justification and salvation by their own strength and righteousness. But the children of the promise are counted for the seed, not for the sake of any merit or desert of their own, but only by virtue of the promise, in which God obliged himself, of his own good pleasure, to grant the promised favour. The apostle evidently speaks of a true Israel among the descendants of Israel. The children of the promise are those whom God gives to Abraham by a spiritual generation, whether alone, as in the case of us gentiles; or added to the carnal generation, as in the case of Isaac, and of all believing jews. The apostle does not in this place distinguish the children of Abraham as known from others by their faith; but he discourses concerning the primary cause, that is, the fountain of their faith itself, the eternal purpose of free or gratuitous election.

2. The case of Jacob and Esau, ver.

10—13, is much stronger, and also plainly shows that the carnal seed of Abraham were not, as such, interested in the promise, but only such of them as God in sovereignty had appointed. There was a difference between Ishmael and Isaac before Ishmael was cast out. Ishmael was the son of the bond-woman, born long before Isaac, of a fierce, rugged disposition, and had mocked, or persecuted Isaac. But Jacob and Esau were both the sons of Isaac, by one mother. The difference was made between them by the Divine counsel, before they were born, or had done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand; that this great truth may be established, that God, by his own absolute and sovereign will, dispenses his favours, or withholds them, as he pleases.

It means here a purpose which God did not entertain because he was moved to it by any thing which Jacob or Esau had done, or would do, but for reasons which he has not disclosed, and which pertain merely to himself. But let no one represent, or even imagine, these reasons to be arbitrary or ungrounded. This would be to represent the Divine conduct as utterly inconsistent with infinite wisdom and goodness.—(97.)

This is further illustrated from Mal. 1. 2, 3, where it is said, not of Jacob and Esau the persons, but of the Edomites and Israelites their posterity. Jacob have I loved, and Esau have I hated. Such a difference did God put between those two nations, both of which descended from Abraham and Isaac; as at first there was a difference put between Jacob and Esau, the distinguishing heads of those two nations. God foresaw both Esau and Jacob as born in sin, and by nature the children of wrath even as others, and if left to themselves, they would have continued in sin through life; but for wise and holy reasons known to himself, yet not revealed to us, he purposed to change Jacob's heart, and to leave Esau to his native perverseness. Wick- edness foreseen is doubtless the cause of the Lord's purpose to condemn; because it is of a man's self by nature, and God condemns none who do not justly deserve it; but holiness foreseen in a fallen creature cannot be the cause of his election; because it is the effect of new creating grace, and never comes from any other source. This instance of Esau and Jacob

was an illustration of the Divine conduct towards the fallen race of man. The whole scripture shows the difference between the professed christian and the real believer. Outward privileges are bestowed on many who are not the children of God. There is, however, full encouragement to diligent use of the means of grace which God has appointed.

13 It is pleaded by some, that God's *loving Jacob and hating Esau*, did not respect them *personally*, but only their *posterity*, and had relation not to their *eternal*, but only their *temporal* concerns. But, as the subject of the apostle's discourse, in the preceding chapter, is about *internal and saving* benefits, and he begins this chapter with a lamentation, that the greatest part of the jews were not *affectionally* called, it seems incongruous to suppose, that when he comes to account for this, by showing that God had chosen and called some, and rejected others of the natural seed of Abraham, ver. 6, 7, and proceeds to illustrate it, by the distinction that was made between one and another of Abraham's and of Jacob's immediate offspring, he should entirely drop the consideration of *spiritual* and *eternal* blessings, and confine his thoughts to those that were only *external* and *temporal*; and yet that, after all this, in winding up the argument, ver. 22, 23, he should apply it to the *vessels of wrath fitted for destruction*, and to the *vessels of mercy, which God had afore prepared unto glory*. And were we to restrict the apostle's sense of God's *loving Jacob, and hating Esau*, to what is said in Malachi about his *laying Esau's mountains and heritage waste for the dragons in the wilderness*, it would be so foreign to the apostle's design, that it would not come up to so much as an instance of any religious privileges at all, though but of an *external* nature, being granted or denied to any person or body of people whatsoever. And it is observable, that the apostle does not go so far in his quotation, as to take in these last words in Malachi, they not serving the purpose of his present argument. Why then should we not understand the passage, as far as he quotes it, in an accommodated sense, suitable to the tenour of his discourse, as signifying Jacob and Esau personally considered; and so giving us leading examples of a *personal* election of some to all the blessings mentioned in the foregoing chapter, and of God's passing by others? since these two persons are mentioned by name, and the event proved that Jacob was a good man, who was blessed with spiritual blessings, and is now in heaven, Luke 13. 28, and Esau is spoken of as a *profane person, who sold his birthright*, and all the *spiritual*, as well as *temporal* blessings pertaining to it. Heb. 12. 16.—*Gayse*.

Ver. 14—24. The apostle having asserted the true meaning of the promise, here maintains and proves the absolute sovereignty of God, in disposing of the children of men, with reference to their eternal state. And herein God is to be considered, not as Governor, distributing rewards and punishments according to his revealed laws and covenants, but

as Owner and Benefactor, giving to the children of men such grace and favour as he has determined in and by his eternal will and counsel: both the favour of visible privileges, given to some people and denied to others, and the favour of effectual grace, given to some particular persons and denied to others.

This part of the discourse answers two objections.

1. It might be objected, Is there unrighteousness with God? If God does thus choose some and refuse others, may it not be suspected, that there is unrighteousness with him? The apostle startles at the thought of this! Far be it from us to think such a thing; shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? Gen. 18. 25; 3. 5, 6. He denies the consequence, and proves the denial.

1. In respect of those to whom God shows mercy, ver. 15, 16. The scripture quoted to show God's sovereignty in dispensing his favours, is Exod. 33. 19. I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious. All God's reasons of mercy are taken from within himself. All the children of men being alike in a state of sin and misery, equally under guilt and wrath, God makes some from this fallen apostatized race, to be vessels of grace and glory. He dispenses his gifts without giving us any reason. He gives not account of any of his matters, nor is it fit he should. He is a competent Judge. Whatsoever God does, or is resolved to do, must be just. Hence is inferred, ver. 16. It is not of him that willeth. Whatever good comes from God to man, the glory of it is to be ascribed only to the free grace and mercy of God. Wherein the holy happy people of God differ from other people, it is God and his grace that makes them differ. Applying this general rule to the particular case that has been referred to, the reason why the unworthy ill-deserving gentiles are called, and grafted into the church, while the greatest part of the jews are left to perish in unbelief, is not because those gentiles were better deserving, or better disposed for such a favour, but because of God's free grace which made that difference. The gentiles sat in darkness, Matt. 4. 16. In darkness therefore not desiring what they knew; not; sitting in darkness, a contented posture, therefore not running to meet it, but those invaluable blessings of good-

ness preceded their efforts. Such is the method of God's grace towards all that partake of it, for he is found of them that sought him not, Isa. 65. 1. In this preventing, effectual, distinguishing grace, he acts as a benefactor, whose grace is his own. Our eye must not be evil, because his is good; but of all the grace we or others have, he must have the glory; Not unto us, Ps. 115. 1.

2. In respect of those who perish, ver. 17. God's sovereignty, manifested in the ruin of sinners, is here shown in the instance of Pharaoh, Exod. 9. 16. The destroying such a prince proclaimed God glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders, Exod. 15. 11. God advanced him in his providence to authority and prosperity, and spared his life through the plagues of Egypt, but left him to harden himself in enmity and rebellion. God had declared that this was on purpose that in Pharaoh's destruction he might make known his own power and glory through the earth.

The conclusion concerning both these we have, ver. 18. He hath mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth. The various dealings of God, by which he makes some to differ from others, must be resolved into his absolute sovereignty. His grace is his own, he may give or withhold it as pleases him; none have deserved it; we have all justly forfeited it a thousand times; so that herein the work of our salvation is admirably well ordered, that those who are saved, must thank God only, and those who perish, must blame themselves only, Hos. 13. 9. We are bound, as God hath bound us, to do our utmost for the salvation of all we have to do with; but God is bound no further than he has been pleased to bind himself by his own covenant and promise, which is his revealed will; and that is, that he will receive, and not cast out, those that come to Christ; but the drawing of souls in order to that coming, is an anticipating, distinguishing favour to whom he will. Had he mercy on the gentiles? It was because he would have mercy on them. Were the Jews hardened? It was because it was his own pleasure to give them up to their chosen unbelief. Even so, Father, because it seemed good unto thee. The scripture, Luke 10. 21, explains this, and, as well as this shows the sovereign will of God, in

giving or withholding both the means of grace, and the effectual blessing upon those means.

II. It might be further objected, Why doth He yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will? ver. 19. This objection is commonly advanced against the doctrine of distinguishing grace. If God, while he gives effectual grace to some, denies it to others, why does he find fault with those to whom he denies it? If he hath rejected the Jews, and hid from their eyes the things that belong to their peace, why does he find fault with them for their blindness? His will, some would say, is universally done, no creature makes any opposition to it. But is the secret purpose of God a rule of duty to his creatures? Can it possibly be so? Or, does a man intend to do the will of God, by breaking his express commands, to gratify his own lusts? This objection is answered,

1. By reproving the objector, ver. 20. Nay but, O man. This is not an objection fit to be made by the creature against his Creator, by man against God. The truth, as it is in Jesus, abases man as nothing less than nothing, and advances God as sovereign Lord of all. Who art thou, thou that art so foolish, so feeble, so short-sighted, so incompetent a judge of the Divine counsels? Art thou able to fathom such a depth, dispute such a case, to trace that way of God which is in the sea, his path in the great waters? Who art thou that repliest against God? It becomes us to submit to him, not to reply against him; thus charging the Almighty, all-wise God, with injustice and want of wisdom.

2. By resolving all into the Divine sovereignty, ver. 21. We are the thing formed, God is the Maker; and it does not become us to arraign his wisdom in disposing it into this or that shape or figure. God's sovereignty over man is fitly illustrated by the power the potter has over the clay; compare Jer. 18. 6, where, by a like comparison, God asserts his dominion over the nation of the Jews, when he was about to magnify his justice in their destruction by Nebuchadnezzar. Would not men allow the infinite God the same sovereign right to manage the affairs of the creation, as the potter exercises in disposing of his clay, when of the same lump he makes one to a more honourable, and one to a meaner use? Would

they not infer from God's infinite perfection, that he could do no wrong, however it might appear to them?

The application of the comparison is in ver. 22—24. Two sorts of vessels are formed out of the mass of fallen mankind. Vessels of wrath. This must be showed to all the world, God will make it appear that he hates sin. In order to this, God endured evil men with much long-suffering; exercised patience toward them, let them alone, till they were ripe for ruin, and so became fitted for destruction, fitted by their own sin, and self-hardening. The reigning corruptions and wickedness of the soul are its preparedness and disposedness for hell. Also he formed vessels of mercy; filled with mercy. The happiness bestowed on the saved remnant, is not the fruit of their merit, but of God's mercy. The spring of all the joy and glory of heaven, is that mercy of God which endures for ever. He designs in them to make known the riches of his glory, that is, of his goodness; for God's goodness is his greatest glory. God makes known his glory, this goodness, in the preservation and supply of all the creatures; the earth is full of his goodness, and the year crowned with it; but when he would demonstrate the riches of his goodness, unsearchable riches, he does it in the salvation of the saints, who will be to eternity glorious monuments of Divine grace. He prepares them to glory. Sanctification is the preparation of the soul for glory, making it meet to partake of the inheritance of the saints in light. This is God's work; we can destroy ourselves fast enough, but we cannot save ourselves. Sinners fit themselves for hell, but it is God who prepares saints for heaven: and all those that God designs for heaven *hereafter*, he prepares and fits for heaven *now*. And would we know who these vessels of mercy are? Those whom God hath called; ver. 24, and these not of the Jews only, but of the gentiles. The question is not now, whether of the seed of Abraham or not, but whether called or not according to his purpose. The different language used concerning the vessels of wrath and the vessels of mercy is of the greatest importance in stating this doctrine solidly and scripturally. The former are "fitted for destruction," but it is not said that God fitted them. He saw them in themselves deserving

wrath, fit for the place of torment, and the company of fallen angels. But God himself "had afore prepared" the vessels of mercy for glory. The expression "mercy" shows they had deserved wrath, and preparation for glory shows they had in themselves been unprepared.

Surely there can be no unrighteousness in any of these Divine dispensations. Not in God's withholding the grace he is under no obligation to give. Not in his delivering men up to the evil way of their own choosing. Not in suffering Satan to blind and harden those who have enlisted in his service, and take pleasure in doing his will, in opposition to that of God. Nor in exercising great long-suffering, patience, and forbearance towards them under high provocations, before he brings utter destruction upon them. The fault is in the hardened sinner himself; so far as God is concerned, it is in such a manner as shows there is no unrighteousness in it, nor just ground of complaint.—(82)

And surely, as to all who love and fear God, however such truths may appear beyond their reason to fathom, yet they should reverently keep silence before him. Let caution, humility, and awe, restrain and guide all who speak or write on these subjects. If we have experienced something of the change of heart, surely we must allow that it is the Lord alone who hath made us to differ, and we should adore his pardoning mercy and new creating grace, and give diligence to make our calling and election sure.

17. Or "Made thee to stand," that is, preserved thee.—See *Guyse*. Or, "roused thee up."—*Stuart*.

18. "So then he hath mercy," as in ver. 16.—*Scholefield*. This passage should be taken with the whole context, beginning chap. 8. 18, and extending to the end of chap. 11.

20. It were easy to multiply questions indefinitely, respecting things every day exhibited before our eyes. Why is this man born white, and that one black? Why is this child born and nurtured in a pious family, and that one in the midst of robbers? The answers must at last resolve the whole into the Divine sovereignty. The world is full of that which teaches this doctrine. All nature speaks it, and speaks it loudly too; not less so than the bible itself. Yet, with all this, the bible plainly recognises the freedom of men, and attributes to themselves their own destruction. The world say that (1) is contradiction here; but if there be, the naturalist has as really to contend with its difficulty as the advocate for revelation. However, there can in reality be no contradiction or absurdity in two things, both of which are true. All the

difficully is in us. Being ignorant of the manner in which predestination and free agency can be reconciled, we are prone to think that they are irreconcilable. When will men learn that their ignorance is not the measure of truth?—*Stuart*. He observes elsewhere, "Infinite wisdom and goodness can never act at all without reason, nor without the very best reason. God has disclosed enough to satisfy us that he is wise and good. May there not be something left, to exercise our filial confidence, and to give us what well becomes us, a deep sense of our humble and imperfect condition? Shall we prescribe to God the terms of our moral discipline?"

Ver. 25—29. Having explained the promise, and proved the Divine sovereignty, next there is shown how the rejection of the jews, and the taking in the gentiles, were foretold in the Old Testament, and therefore must be consistent with the promise made to the fathers under the Old Testament. It tends very much to the clearing of a truth, to observe how the scripture is fulfilled in it. The jews would, no doubt, willingly refer to the Old Testament, the scriptures of which were committed to them. The prophet Hosea speaks of the taking in many of the gentiles, Hos. 2. 23, and 1. 10. The gentiles had not been the people of God; not owning him, or owned by him in that relation. But, says he, I will call them my people, make them such, and own them as such, notwithstanding all their unworthiness. A blessed change! Wherever they are scattered over the face of the earth, there will God own them. Observe the great dignity and honour of the saints, that they are the children of the living God; his calling them so makes them so. The prophet Isaiah, chap. 10. 22, 23, speaks of the saving of a remnant, that is, but a remnant; which, though in the prophecy it seems to refer to the preservation of a remnant from the destruction and desolation coming upon them by Sennacherib and his army, yet is to be understood as looking further; and sufficiently proves that it is no strange thing for God to abandon many of the seed of Abraham, and yet maintain his word of promise to Abraham in full force. In this salvation of the remnant, we are told, from the prophet, that God will complete the work. When God begins, he will make an end, whether in ways of judgment or of mercy. For God, his work is perfect. He will only finish it, but finish it quickly. But he will cut it short in righteousness, both in wisdom and in justice.

Another passage is quoted from Isa. 1. 9. This is to the same purport with the former. Observe, what God is. He is the Lord of sabaoth, the Lord of hosts. When God secures a seed to himself out of a degenerate, apostate world, it is an act of Almighty power and infinite sovereignty. It is a wonder of Divine power and mercy that all are not destroyed, that there are any saved: for even those left to be a seed, if God had dealt with them according to their sins, had perished with the rest. This is the great truth this scripture teacheth us. Alas! even among the vast number of professing christians it is to be feared that only a remnant will be saved, and that the Lord will be righteous in the destruction of the greater number.

Ver. 30—33. We come here to the reason of receiving the gentiles, and rejecting the jews. There was a difference in the way of their seeking, therefore there was different success; though still it was the free grace of God that made them differ. Concerning the gentiles, observe how they had been alienated from righteousness; they followed not after it; they knew not their guilt and misery, and therefore were not at all solicitous to procure a remedy. In their conversion, God was found of them that sought him not, Isa. 65. 1. There was nothing in them to dispose them for such a favour, more than what free grace wrought in them. They attained to righteousness notwithstanding, by faith. Not by being proselyted to the jewish religion, and submitting to the ceremonial law, but by embracing Christ, believing in Christ, and submitting to the gospel. Concerning the jews, observe, how they missed their end; they followed after the law of righteousness, ver. 31. they talked much of justification and holiness, seemed very ambitious of being the favourites of God, but they did not attain to it, that is, the greatest part of them did not. They mistook their way, which was the cause of their missing the end, ver. 32, 33. They sought, but not in the right way, not in the humbling way, not in the instituted appointed way. Not by faith, not by embracing Christ, and depending upon Christ, and submitting to the gospel. But they sought by the works of the law; as if they expected justification

by their observance of the precepts and ceremonies of the law of Moses. This was the stumbling-stone at which they stumbled. They could not get over the corrupt principles they had taken up,—as that the law was given for no end but that by their observance of it, and obedience to it, they might be justified before God. Thus they could by no means be reconciled to the doctrine of Christ, which brought them to expect justification through the merit and satisfaction of another. Christ is to some a stone of stumbling, Isa. 8. 14 ; 28. 16. It is said that Christ should be set for the fall of any, yet it is so, Luke 2. 34, that the Foundation stone should be to any a stone of stumbling, and the Rock of salvation a rock of offence, yet so he is to multitudes: so he was to the unbelieving jews, who rejected him, because he put an end to the ceremonial law. But there is a remnant that do believe on him, and they shall not be ashamed; their hopes and expectations of justification by him shall not be disappointed, as those who expect it by the law. So that the unbelieving jews had a fair offer of righteousness, life, and salvation, made them upon gospel terms, which they did not like, and would not come to; therefore if they perish, their blood is upon their own heads.

And have we seriously inquired how we may be justified before God, seeking that invaluable blessing in the way here pointed out? Seeking it, not as by the works of the law, but by faith in Christ, as the Lord our righteousness. He has been, in this respect, to many a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence! May Divine grace teach us the necessity of building upon him, of resting upon him, the whole stress of our eternal hopes! Then we shall not sink into disappointment and ruin; then we shall not flee away ashamed in that awful day, when the refuge of lies shall be swept away, and the final deluge of Divine wrath shall overflow every hiding-place but that which God hath prepared for us in his own Son.—(80.)

CHAPTER X.

The apostle repeats a profession of his hearty desire for the salvation of the jews, who had a misguided zeal for God and religion, ver. 1—4. Sets out the difference between the righteousness of the law, by

which they sought to be justified, and the righteousness of faith, which is revealed in the gospel, 5—11. Shows that the gentiles stand on a level with the jews, in the great business of justification and salvation, 12—17. And that the jews themselves might know this from Old Testament prophecies, 18—21.

Ver. 1—4. The apostle, being aware that the jews and many jewish christians would be offended at his doctrine, again declared his earnest desires and fervent prayers for the salvation of his people, though they persecuted him. He was also ready to bear testimony that the jews were very zealous in matters concerning their religion, according to the law of Moses, as they understood it. But thus was an ignorant zeal, from their misunderstanding the law itself, and so it led them to oppose the salvation of Christ, to their ruin. Not knowing the nature of that righteousness which God has provided for the justification of sinners, they had sought to establish their own righteousness, as the ground of their justification. Thus they refused to submit to the justice of God in their condemnation, and to seek righteousness as his free gift by faith alone. Thus the jews built on a false foundation, and refused to come to Christ for free salvation by faith, and numbers in every age do the same in varied forms. To this they would not submit, not knowing that he was the end and scope of the law, the great object set forth therein, for the justification of all believers. The strictness of the law showed men their need of salvation by grace, through faith; and the ceremonies shadowed forth Christ as fulfilling the righteousness and bearing the curse of the law; so that even under the law, all who were justified before God, obtained that blessing by faith, whereby they were made partakers of the perfect righteousness of the promised and Divine Redeemer.

The law is not destroyed, nor the intention of the lawgiver frustrated; but full satisfaction being made by the death of Christ for our breach of the law, the end is attained. Christ is thus the end of the law for righteousness, for justification; but it is only to every one who believeth. Upon our believing, our humbly consenting to the terms of the gospel, we become interested in Christ's satis-

faction, and so are justified through the redemption that is in Jesus. Sinners never could persist in their vain ideas of their own righteousness, if they knew either the justice of God as a Governor, or his righteousness as a Saviour. But being ignorant or careless, both of the law and the gospel, they do not allow the justice of the sentence denounced against them, nor are they willing to be saved by the righteousness of faith. Manifold are their endeavours to establish their own righteousness, but all their labour is lost, Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.

2. A zeal for or towards God, but not in conformity with sound knowledge.—*Bloomfield.*

3. The pharisees certainly inculcated the outward duties of morality, how much soever they might themselves fail in them, or rest in outward acts; but they trusted in the expiations of the law, to procure the pardon of those evils which might happen; and the composition of these, if the expression may be allowed, constituted the righteousness which they went about to establish or prop up, decrepit as it was.—*Doddridge.*

Ver. 5—11. Moses repeatedly had shown the righteousness the law demanded in order to justification; his statement proved that none could be accepted according to the law, without sinless obedience to every precept. But the self-condemned sinner is not called on to perplex himself with inquiries how this righteousness may be found, or to say in his heart, Who shall ascend into heaven for it? Christ has already come down, and has finished that work. Nor is he put upon inquiring, Who shall bring back the crucified Saviour from the dead? for that was already done. Nor were the means of obtaining information about it at a distance, but nigh to them, in the word of faith, which the ministers of Christ were sent to preach, and in the mouths of all who professed the gospel, and in the hearts of all who believed it. The word is nigh thee. It is very plain and easy. When we speak of looking upon Christ, and receiving Christ, and feeding upon Christ, it is not Christ in heaven, nor Christ in the deep, that we mean; but Christ in the promise, Christ exhibited to us, and offered in the word. Christ is nigh thee, for the word is nigh thee: nigh thee indeed; it is in thy mouth, and in thy heart: there is no difficulty in understanding, believing, and owning it. The work thou hast to do, lies within thee; the kingdom of God

is within you, Luke 17. 21. Thence thou must fetch thy evidences, not out of the records of heaven. All which is to be done for us, is already done. Christ is come down from heaven, we need not go to fetch him. He is come up from the deep, we need not perplex ourselves how to bring him up. There is nothing now to be done but the work in us; it must be our care to look to our hearts and mouths.

Justification by faith in Christ is a plain, intelligible doctrine, ver. 8. It is not shut up in mysterious language, but like what Moses says of the statutes he gave to Israel, it is plain, intelligible, accessible. It is not in the books of countries beyond the impassable ocean; not in the mysterious book of God in heaven, yet undisclosed; not in the world beneath, which none can penetrate and return to disclose its secrets. It is brought before the mind and heart of every one, thus leaving him without excuse for unbelief.—(97.)

If a man confessed faith in Jesus, as the Lord and Saviour of lost sinners, and really believed in his heart that God had raised him from the dead, thus evidencing that he had accepted the atonement, he should certainly be saved by the righteousness of Christ imputed to him through faith, ver. 9. This is illustrated, ver. 10, and the order inverted, because there must first be faith in the heart, before there can be acceptable confession with the mouth. Concerning faith; it is with the heart that man believeth: which implies more than an assent of the understanding, and takes in the consent of the will, an inward, hearty, sincere, and strong consent. It is not believing, if it be not with the heart. This is unto righteousness. Faith is the root and spring of our sanctification; therein it is begun; thereby it is carried on, Acts 15. 9. No faith is justifying which is not efficacious in sanctifying the heart, and regulating all its affections in subservience to the love of Christ.

Concerning profession; it is with the mouth that confession is made; confession to God in prayer and praise, chap. 15. 6, confession to men, owning the ways of God before others, especially when we are called to it in a day of persecution. The bold confession of Christ's name and truth among enemies, and in the face of danger, evidences a man's faith to be genuine, and gives a sure

hope of salvation; while those who refuse to make this open profession, have no reason to conclude that they truly believe in Christ for righteousness and salvation. We must devote, dedicate, and give up to God, our souls and our bodies; our souls in believing with the heart, and our bodies in confessing with the mouth. This do, and thou shalt live.

The apostle quotes Isa. 28. 16, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.

1. He will not be ashamed to own that Christ in whom he trusts; he that believes in the heart, will not be ashamed to confess with the mouth. It is sinful shame that makes people deny Christ, Mark 8. 38. He that believeth, will not make haste; so the prophet has it; will not make haste to run away from the sufferings he meets with in the way of his duty; will not be ashamed of a despised religion.

2. He shall not be ashamed of his hope in Christ; he shall not be disappointed of his end. It is our duty that we must not, it is our privilege that we shall not be ashamed of our faith in Christ. He shall never have cause to repent his confidence in reposing such trust in the Lord Jesus. Of such faith no sinner shall be ashamed before God; he ought therefore to glory in it before man.

9. It is not necessary that every particular believer's name should be written. It is enough if the promises are universally delivered, because universals include all particulars. All believers shall be saved, therefore I also believing, shall be saved. Also here is a particular promise, "If thou," speaking to every one as by name, as is the tenour of the law, and every one takes himself to be meant.—*Parr.*

Ver. 12—17. If Jesus Christ there is neither greek nor jew, Col. 3. 11. God does not save any, or reject any, because they are jews, or because they are greeks, but equally accepts both upon gospel terms. There is no difference. For the proof of this, two arguments are urged.

1. That God is the same to all. The same Lord over all is rich unto all, ver. 12. There is not one God to the jews, more kind, and another to the gentiles, who is less kind; but he is the same to all, a common Father to all mankind. When he proclaimed his name, the Lord, the Lord God, gracious and merciful, he thereby signified not only what he was to the jews, but what he is, and will be,

to all his creatures that seek unto him. Not only good, but rich, plenteous in goodness; he has wherewith to supply them all, and he is free and ready to give to them; he is both able and willing: not only rich, but rich unto us, liberal and bountiful in dispensing his favours to all that call upon him. He will for this be inquired of, Ezek. 36. 37.

2. That the promise is the same to all. Whosoever shall call; one as well as another, without exception, ver. 13. This extent of the promise both to jews and gentiles was foretold, Joel 2. 32. Calling on the name of the Lord, invoking the Lord Jesus as the coequal Son of God, God manifest in the flesh. All believers thus called upon the Lord Jesus, and none else would do so humbly or sincerely. Therefore all, whether jews or gentiles, who thus sought help from him would be saved. But how should any call on the Lord Jesus, the Divine Saviour, who had not heard of him? And what is the life of a christian but a life of prayer? It implies a sense of our dependence on him, and entire dedication of ourselves to him, a believing expectation of our all from him. For the further illustration of this, observe,—


(1.) How necessary it was that the gospel should be preached to the gentiles, ver. 14, 15. They cannot call on him in whom they have not believed. Except they believe that he is God, they will not call upon him by prayer. The grace of faith is absolutely necessary to the duty of prayer; we cannot pray aright, nor pray to acceptance, without it. He that comes to God by prayer, must believe, Heb. 11. 6. They cannot believe in him of whom they have not heard. The Divine revelation must be made known to us, before we can receive it and assent to it. In hearing is included reading, by which many are brought to believe, John 20. 31. These things are written, that you may believe. They cannot hear without a preacher; how should they? Somebody must show them what they are to believe. They cannot preach except they be sent, except commissioned, and qualified for the work.

(2.) How welcome the gospel ought to be to those to whom it was preached, because it showed the way to salvation, ver. 15. Isa. 52. 7, is quoted. Observe what the gospel is: it is the gospel of peace, it is the word of reconciliation between

God and man ; the things of the gospel are indeed the best things ; tidings concerning them are the most joyful that ever came from heaven to earth. The work of ministers is, to preach this gospel, to bring these glad tidings. Every preacher is in this sense an evangelist. How acceptable they should be to the children of men for their work's sake ; how beautiful are their feet, how welcome are they ! Those who preach the gospel of peace, should see to it that their feet, their life and conversation, be beautiful. How beautiful ! those that welcome the message, cannot but love the messengers.

(3.) He answers an objection which might be taken from the small success which the gospel had in many places ; ver. 16. But they have not all obeyed the gospel. All the jews have not, all the gentiles have not ; far the greater part of both remain in unbelief and disobedience. The gospel is given us, not only to be known and believed, but to be obeyed. It is not a system of notions, but a rule of practice. This little success of the word was likewise foretold by the prophet, Isa. 53. 1. Who hath believed our report ? Very few, considering how faithful a report it is, and how well worthy of all acceptance ; very few to the many that persist in unbelief. It is not strange, but it is sad, for the ministers of Christ to bring the report of the gospel, and not to be believed in it. In answer to this, the apostle shows that the word preached is the ordinary means of working faith, ver. 17. So then, though many that hear, do not believe, yet those that believe, have first heard. The beginning, progress, and strength of faith, is by hearing. God gives faith, but it is by the word as the instrument. It is not hearing the enticing words of man's wisdom, but hearing the word of God, that will strengthen faith, and hearing it as the word of God.

14 That the Person here represented as believed on and invoked is the Messiah, appears plain from the obvious fact, that believing on him for obtaining salvation is the subject of the whole passage and its connexion.—*J. P. Sm th.*

 Ver. 18—21. As then the hearing of report concerning Christ, was absolutely necessary to faith in him and salvation by him, could it be said that the jews had not had an opportunity of hearing it ? The gospel had been so

extensively diffused that the words of the psalmist respecting the instructions conveyed to all nations by the luminaries of heaven, as typical of the Sun of righteousness, might well be applied. The gentiles had heard it, ver. 18. The commission which the apostles received, was this, Go ye into all the world, preach to every creature, disciple all nations ; and they pursued that commission with indefatigable industry and wonderful success. In order to this, the gift of tongues was at the very first poured so plentifully upon the apostles, Acts 2. The Jews have heard it also, ver. 19—21. For this the apostle appeals to two passages of the Old Testament. Did not Israel know that the gentiles were to be called in ? They might have known it from Moses and Isaiah. I will provoke you to jealousy, Deut. 32. 21. The jews not only had the offer, but saw the gentiles accepting it. In all places where the apostles came, the jews had the first offer. They, as the elder brother in the parable, Luke 15, envied the reception of the gentiles, when they should have been stirred up not to be surpassed in faith and holiness by those who had been so ignorant, and so far from God. The gentiles are here called, no people, and a foolish nation, not the professing people of God : how much soever there be of the wisdom of the world, those who are not the people of God, are, and in the end will be found to be, a foolish people. Such was the state of the gentile world, who yet were made the people of God, and Christ to them the wisdom of God.

Another passage is taken from Isa. 65. 1, 2, which is very full, and in it the prophet is very bold ; bold indeed, to speak so plainly of the rejection of his own countrymen. Those that will be found faithful, have need to be very bold. Those that are resolved to please God, must not be afraid to displease any man. Isaiah speaks plainly of the grace and favour of God, as going before in the reception and entertainment of the gentiles, ver. 20. I was found of them that sought me not. Thus he manifested himself to the gentiles, by sending the light of the gospel among them, when they were so far from seeking him and asking after him, that they were following after lying vanities, and serving dumb idols. Was not this our own particular case ? Did

not God begin in love, and manifest himself to us when we did not ask after him? And was not that a time to be often remembered with great thankfulness? Observe, God's great goodness to Israel, ver. 21. All day long I have stretched forth my hands; offering life and salvation with the greatest sincerity and seriousness, with all possible expressions of earnestness and importunity. Observe his patience in making these offers; All day long. The patience of God toward provoking sinners is admirable. He wants to be gracious. The time of God's patience is here called a day, light as a day, and fit for work and business; but limited as a day, and a night at the end of it. He bears long, but he will not bear always.

They were a disobedient gainsaying people, ver. 21. Many will not accept a good proposal, yet will acknowledge they have nothing to say against it: but the jews who believed not, contradicted and blasphemed. God's patience with them was a very great aggravation of their disobedience, and rendered that the more sinful; as their disobedience rendered God's patience the more exceedingly gracious. We may wonder at the mercy of God, that his goodness is not overcome by man's badness; we may wonder at the wickedness of man, that his badness is not overcome by God's goodness.

It is matter of continual joy to reflect that God has sent the express messages of grace to so many millions by the extensive publication of his gospel. Let us rejoice in the spread it has already had, and let us daily and earnestly pray that the voice of the messengers who proclaim it may go forth to all the earth, and their words literally reach to the remotest parts of our habitable world. Let us pray that wherever the word of God has a free course, it may be more abundantly glorified, and that his ministers may not have so much reason to say, Who hath believed our report? or to complain of stretching out their hands to a disobedient, gainsaying people. Shed abroad, O Lord, thy saving influences on the hearts of multitudes that they may believe and turn to the Lord. May the great Saviour of Israel be found of those who seek him not; and by his grace be manifested to those who do not inquire after him. And may his ancient people speedily be

awakened to claim those blessings which God by his Son has vouchsafed to offer to all the gentiles.—(80.)

CHAPTER XI.

The apostle shows that the rejection of the jews is not universal; but that God's elect among them obtained salvation by grace, while the rest, through the blindness and hardness of their hearts, fell short of it, ver. 1—10. That God's cutting them off, as a nation, from his visible church and covenant, is not final; and that as he had overruled their unbelief, for making the gentiles partakers of gospel privileges in their stead; so the gentiles ought not to insult over them, on this account; but rather take caution from them to watch against pride and unbelief, lest God, in his righteous severity, should anathematize them, as he had the jews, who nevertheless, it appears, shall in due season be nationally called, and brought into God's visible covenant again, 11—32. And the whole is closed with a solemn adoration of the profound wisdom, goodness, and justice of God, in all the beforementioned dispensations, 33—36.

Ver. 1—6. If any should inquire whether God had utterly cast away his chosen Israel, and so failed of performing his promises to their fathers?—Hath God cast away his people? Is the rejection total and final? Are they all abandoned to wrath and ruin, and that eternal? Will he no more have a peculiar people to himself? St. Paul utterly disavowed such a view. There was a chosen remnant of believing jews, who obtained righteousness and life by faith in Jesus Christ. All the jews who were willing to become disciples of Christ were readily received; of this the apostle himself was a remarkable instance, who, being a descendant of Abraham, and once a furious persecutor of the church, was now become an apostle of Christ. As in the days of Elijah, there was a remnant left, of many thousand jews, at the very period when the nation was cast off from being the people of God.

These were reserved according to the election of grace, ver. 5, not because less undeserving than others, but because God was pleased to have mercy on them, for reasons which he had not seen it good to reveal; otherwise they would have perished in unbelief; then this election was of grace, it could not be of works, either performed or foreseen, for if in any sense, or in the

smallest degree it were of works, it would, in part at least, be of debt, and then not of entire free favour. This text is most clear upon this all-important subject. Every truly good disposition in a fallen creature must be the effect, therefore it cannot be the cause, of the grace of God bestowed on him.

To suppose otherwise is to destroy the very idea of grace, which signifies entirely free and unmerited favour, as proceeding only from the good pleasure of God, and not from any worthiness in its objects to produce it, ver. 6. Salvation from the first to the last must be simply of the one to the exclusion of the other. It must be either of grace or of debt, chap. 4. 4. These things are so directly contrary to each other that they cannot be blended together. It is not, however, to be supposed that God takes one rather than another, without some wise reason in himself, though there is no cause in them why he should take one rather than another. He glorifies his grace in all he chooses, changing the hearts, and altering the tempers and dispositions of the most obstinate and rebellious; making them what he would have them to be, and fitting them to answer every design for which he chose them. How then should those be affected with admiration and praise whom he has thus separated for the noblest purposes!—(82.)

If the seal of conformity to Christ be affixed to our souls, we may be assured of his everlasting favour, and of all the happiness which springs from it. We may also believe that God has reserved for himself a far greater number than we are aware of. But while the whole glory of salvation must be given to the grace of God, sinners perish for their own wickedness; and those who seek his favour in unauthorized ways never will obtain it.

Ver. 7—10. What then was the precise state of the Jewish nation? In general they had not obtained the justification unto life which they sought for; because they clung to their own deceptions, and rejected the gospel offers. But the election, or chosen remnant among them, had obtained it, while the rest are blinded, ver. 7, so that the rejection of the latter was the just punishment of their sins; but the calling of the

former was neither the consequence nor the reward of their own works. The "election" or choice, here mentioned as distinct from Israel, God's chosen people, that is, an election within an election, clearly marks the difference between an election of a people to special outward privileges, and a personal choice of individuals to eternal life; and fully shows that these scriptures are not to be confined to the former kind of election.

This blindness of Christ's enemies had been clearly foretold. The apostle here refers to scripture. Isaiah spake of such a judgment in his day, chap. 29. 10; 6. 9. The spirit of slumber is indisposed to mind duty or interest.

They were as persons in a deep sleep; their senses locked up, without knowledge of their danger or concern about it—having no sense of sin or of their need of a Saviour, or of their being upon the borders of eternal ruin. Careless and secure as persons fast asleep upon a mast, or in the midst of the sea, so that if awakened by force, they immediately return to sleep again, and so sleep the sleep of eternal death. Eyes which being closed by deep sleep and stupidity of mind, could see no beauty in Christ, none of the glory and excellences of his person, blood, righteousness and sacrifice. Ears stopped so that they could not hear. Stopping their ears to the voice of Christ in the gospel, neither understanding his speech nor hearing his word.—(87.)

Of all judgments, spiritual judgments are the most to be dreaded, though they make the least noise. Unto this day, ver. 8. Ever since Isaiah prophesied of this hardening, some among them have been blind and senseless. Ever since the first preaching of the gospel, though they have had the most convincing evidences of its truth, the most powerful preaching, the fairest offers, the clearest calls from Christ himself, and from his apostles; yet to this day they are blinded. David, Ps. 69, having in the Spirit foretold the sufferings of Christ from his own people the Jews, in the next words, foretells the dreadful judgments of God upon them for it, 22, 23. Let their table become a snare; which the apostle here applies to the present blindness of the Jews, and their offence at the gospel, which increased their hardness. This teaches us how to understand

other prayers of David against his enemies; they are prophetic of the judgments of God upon the public and obstinate enemies of Christ and his kingdom, and not expressions of his own resentments. It was likewise intended to justify God, and to clear his righteousness in such judgments. He speaks here of the ruin of their comforts. Let their table be made a snare. Of the ruin of their powers and faculties; they can neither find the right way, nor, if they could, are they able to walk in it. Or, their backs are bowed down in worldly-mindedness. They are manifestly to this day under the power of this curse. Divine curses will work long. It is a sign we have our eyes darkened, if we are bowed down in worldly-mindedness. And it is only by the mercy of God that any of us are preserved from the various strong delusions which might justly have been awarded us, as the recompense of our pride and ungodliness.

Ver. 11—15. The rejection of the jews made room for the reception of the gentiles. Have they stumbled, that they should fall? Had God no other end in forsaking and rejecting them than their destruction? The thought is to be rejected with abhorrence, as any other suggestion which seems to reflect on the wisdom, righteousness, or goodness of God. God forbid; through their fall salvation is come to the gentiles. By the Divine appointment it was so ordered, that the gospel should be preached to the gentiles, upon the jews' refusal. The persecution of the christians in Judea drove them into other regions, and the jews every where rejecting the gospel, excited the preachers to address the gentiles. This fall of them was the riches of the world, ver. 12, it hastened the gospel into the gentile world. The gospel is the greatest riches of every place where it is. If then the exclusion of so large a part from the visible church, and the judgments inflicted on them, was the occasion of communicating such rich blessings to numbers of the gentiles, how much more would their conversion, and acknowledgment of their long despised Messiah! For this they have been preserved a distinct people by a continual miracle, and when it takes place it will undoubtedly exceedingly forward the conversion of the remaining heathen.

Paul spoke as apostle of the gentiles by the especial designation of Christ, anning to magnify that office as most honourable and important. At the same time he represents his zeal for the conversion of the gentiles as animated by the desire of stirring up his brethren the jews, to emulate their faith and to aspire to their privileges, that thus he might be instrumental in saving some though as a nation their doom could not be reversed. And if their sin, which occasioned this casting away, has been the means of reconciling the world by bringing about the death of Christ; what shall the receiving them again into the Divine favour be, whenever it shall take place, but so happy a change, both to themselves and to the gentiles, as may be said to raise the whole world from death to life.

As therefore the righteous rejection of the unbelieving jews had proved the occasion of so large a multitude of the gentiles being reconciled to God, and at peace with him; what would their future reception into the church introduce, but such a change as would resemble a general resurrection of the dead in sin to a life of righteousness, in every part of the world; and increase of spiritual life to all who before had believed. This event will fulfil so many prophecies, in so open and signal a manner, that infidelity in every form must be confuted and silenced, and the attention of the most heedless excited to the astonishing display of the power of God in performing his word. And the Lord will effectually work with these impressions, by pouring out his Holy Spirit to convert the nations, and to render true christianity universally triumphant.

12. *Doddridge* says, So many of the prophecies of the Old Testament evidently refer to the bringing back of the jews into their own land, as the people of the Messiah, that I can by no means doubt the certainty of that event.

14. Provoke, excite. Perhaps we can no where find a more popular and affectionate turn than this, in which the apostle seems to find a reason for his zeal to convert the gentiles in his love to his own countrymen the jews.—*Doddridge*.

15. From this, and various other passages of scripture, it is evident that the restoration of the jews to the Divine favour, will be attended with most beneficial effects to the gentile world.—*Cu*

Ver. 16—21. The apostle speaks of Israel as the visible church of God, the repository of his oracles and ordinances. The patriarchs, the first fruits of Israel,

being chosen and set apart to the Lord, with their descendants, as a holy people, this character remained with the Jewish nation containing the professed people and worshippers of Jehovah.

The subject is illustrated by a similitude. If the root of the tree is holy, the branches are supposed to be the same; we may however observe, that though the illustration of grafting is used, yet the effect here described seems the reverse of natural grafting, where the good scion is inserted on the wild stock, here the good stock imparts efficacy to the wild branches, which, by Divine power are grafted on it. The apostle's reasoning strongly displays the oneness of the visible church of Christ under every dispensation.

Abraham was, as it were, the root of the church in all ages. The Jews continued branches of this tree till, as a nation, they rejected the Messiah; after that their relation to Abraham and to God was as it were cut off. At the same time the Gentiles were grafted into this tree in their room; being admitted into the church of God. They were favoured with the means of grace, and multitudes were thus made heirs of Abraham's faith, holiness, and blessedness. It is the natural state of every one of us, to be wild by nature. Conversion is the grafting in of wild branches into the good olive. We must be cut off from the old stock, and be brought into union with a new root. Those that are grafted into the good olive-tree, partake of the root and fatness of the olive. It is applicable to a saving union with Christ; all who are by a lively faith grafted into Christ, partake of him as the branches from the root, receive from his fulness. But it is here spoken of a visible church, from which the Jews were as branches broken off; and so the Gentiles were grafted in among those who continued, or in the room of those who were broken off. And being grafted into the church, they partake of the same privileges as the Jews did. The blessing of Abraham comes upon the Gentiles, Gal. 3. 14, the same fatness of the olive-tree, the same for instance, special protection, lively oracles, means of salvation, a standing ministry and instituted ordinances. Yet the Gentile Christians were not to become proud of this distinction, nor to

boast over those who had been broken off to make room for them. They were not the root of this well-cultured fruitful tree, nor had they naturally sprung from it, but of free grace, they had been grafted in to share its advantages; from thence all the knowledge of true religion is derived.

Through unbelief, the effect of pride, the Jews had been broken off, and through faith the Gentiles had been grafted in; they ought therefore to beware of self-confidence, self-preference, and every kind of pride or ambition; lest, having only a dead faith, and an empty profession, they should apostatize from God, and forfeit their privileges. As the natural branches had not been spared, they ought surely to fear lest they also should be broken off. This refers to the collective body of professing Christians; though individual believers are to remember that they also are preserved through humility and holy fear. Thou standest by faith, which is a depending grace; not in any strength of thy own, of which thou mightest be confident; thou art no more than the free grace of God makes thee, and his grace is his own, which he gives or withholds at pleasure. That which ruined them was unbelief, and by faith thou standest: therefore thou hast no faster hold than they had, thou standest on no firmer foundation than they did.

How could the Lord endure the Jewish blindness any longer, when after the coming of the Saviour, who displayed true righteousness to the world, and was of power to give everlasting salvation, they not only continued to abuse the types and shadows of the Divine law to other purposes than those they were ordained for, but also from a vain and false persuasion, to the hurt of other nations, taught that true righteousness was to be ascribed to outward observances. But since the apostle speaks only of some of the branches being broken off, it appears that this was not the whole nation of the Jews, but a portion of them only. There remained many, the apostles themselves, and others, who followed Christ.—(58)

They were broken off, not that they fell off, to show that it was done by the hand of the Almighty God, for their unbelief; and it is wonderful that enduring the sharp and severe scourge of God's dreadful displeasure, for so many years

and ages, they never desired to be delivered from this burden, but have flattered themselves with deceitful hopes of an earthly kingdom, awaiting the coming of such a Messiah as their prophets never spake of, though they cannot make answer to their manifest testimonies as to the real nature of his kingdom.—(58.)

But ask the gentiles when the jews were thus broken off, what virtue was in them that they are grafted in their place? The jews excelled in antiquity, they pursued after the rule of righteousness, though not able to attain thereto, while others did not regard it at all. They wanted not fervour and zeal, though they had not true understanding. The jews bare the brunt and heat of the day, while the gentiles came into the vineyard at a later hour. Notwithstanding this they were rent off from the natural stock whereon they grew, and those who were but the starveling boughs of a wild olive, and of an unfruitful stock, are adopted into the inheritance of the sons of God. Then let us, according to the counsel of the apostle, continually remembering the example of the jews, learn from their ruin what we ought to fear, and what we ought to avoid. Let us, by all means possible, with earnest and hearty supplications and prayers, endeavour to escape the dangerous gulf of their unbelief. For being altogether sinful, born of sinful parents, encompassed with the whole body of sin, what do we else, when we call upon God without regard to a Mediator, than raise his wrath and provoke him to aggravate our judgments? What can be more dreadful for man's weak nature, than to debate with God, without Christ?—(58.)

If we stand at all, it is by faith; this implies that we are guilty and helpless in ourselves, and warns us to be humble, watchful, afraid of self-deception, or of being overcome by temptation. Not only are we at first justified by faith, but preserved to the end in that justified state by faith only; yet, by a faith which is not alone, but which is attended by humble repentance, and worketh by love to God and man.

16. An allusion is here made to the solemn presentation of the first fruits, without which all the corn was regarded as unclean and unholy.

17. Commentators have assigned many reasons for the departure from the usual mode of grafting trees, but these are rendered nugatory by the researches of Bredenkamp, who has ascertained

that in ancient times it was usual so to engraft, from the wild into the garden tree, to promote fruitfulness.—*Bloomfield*. The wild olive was often grafted into the fruitful one when it began to decay, and this not only brought forth fruit, but caused the decaying olive to revive and flourish.—*Stuart*.

Ver. 22—24. The gentile converts are warned not to glory in themselves, nor to glory over the rejected jews, but gratefully to admire the unmerited goodness and righteous severity of God, to the one and to the other. Patience, and privileges abused, turn to the greatest wrath. Of all judgments, spiritual judgments are the sorest; for of those the apostle is here speaking.

The kindness and strictness of God are indeed both exemplified in this transaction. After long forbearance, but at length "with fury poured forth," the jews are visited. Most severe is their chastisement! and the kingdom of God is taken from them. What an instance of free and unmerited kindness: to see the gentiles, who asked not for him, called, and made part of the church of God! To continue in God's goodness or kindness, as applied to christian societies, may be applied to the knowledge of the doctrines of grace, Gal. 5. 4. for this being lost, the mercy or benevolence of the christian system is rendered void: it is no longer christianity. And when this apostasy in a church is become total, there is reason to expect that the time for its being deprived of outward privileges is not very distant.—(25.)

On the other hand, if the cast-off jews continue not in unbelief, and that they will not always continue so is clearly foretold in scripture, they also will be grafted in again, be restored to the privileges their fathers enjoyed, and be made members of the church of God. For beyond all doubt, God can do it; and it is consistent with his avowed intentions, and pre-ordained scheme to do so. And, as the apostle argues, the restoration of the jews is, in the course of things, far less improbable and unnatural, than the call and adoption of the gentiles to be the children of Abraham: this is reasoning the force of which the jews would feel if we do not. Now all partition needs to be broken down, (handwriting of ordinances must first be taken away, for the admission of the jews; nothing is wanting but their faith. On their believing, they will be again

taken into the family of their renowned ancestor, and reinvested with their former privileges: and though others are now in possession of these privileges, it will not hinder their readmission.-(25)

Blessed are those who walk humbly with God, who contemplate with reverence and gratitude the strictness and the kindness of the Lord, as revealed in his word, and displayed in his providence; who are led to be sober and watch unto prayer; who, by living faith continue in his goodness, and wait for its complete effect in their eternal salvation. But if any presume that they are the peculiar people of God, and despise others, they will at length be cut off, and cast into the fire as unfruitful branches; while those most estranged from the truth, will find admission to all the privileges of the gospel, if they abide not in unbelief.

25. *T. Scott* says, this v. is spoken prophetically, both respecting the apostasy of the Roman church and the future conversion of the Jews.

26. This grafting in again seems to import that the Jews shall be a flourishing nation again, professing Christianity in the land of promise, for that is to be reinstated again in the promise made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Thus St. Paul might, for good reason, be withheld from speaking out here, but in the prophets there are very plain intimations of it. *Talpy.*

Ver. 25-32. The apostle would not have his Christian brethren ignorant of the mysterious purposes of God respecting his ancient people, lest their present advantages should render them proud. The Lord, in his righteous sovereignty, had permitted blindness in spiritual things to extend over a part of the Jewish nation, which would continue to be the case till the happy period arrived for the conversion of the fulness of the gentiles. It is called, the saving of all Israel, ver. 26. True conversion may well be called salvation; it is salvation begun. In the intermediate ages numbers would be gathered into the church, but about the time of this fulness of the gentiles, the blindness will be removed from Israel, and the nation saved from its rejected and dispersed state, and must at last become true believers. This accords with the prophecy, Isa. 59. 20, 21, which predicts the spiritual coming of Christ, to turn away ungodliness, impotence, and unbelief from the nation of Israel; that by thus removing the guilt

and power of their sins, his covenant may again be confirmed with them. He is Zion's great Deliverer, and he saves those from wrath who are separated from ungodliness. His covenant with his people ensures their sanctification as well as their justification. Christ came into the world to turn away ungodliness, to turn away the guilt by the purchase of pardoning mercy, and to turn away the power by the pouring out of renewing grace. To save his people from their sins, Matt. 1. 21, to part betwixt us and our sins; that iniquity might not be our ruin, and that it might not be our ruler. Especially to turn it away from Jacob; which is a proof of the great kindness God intended for the seed of Jacob. What greater kindness can he do them than to turn away ungodliness from them, to take away that which comes between them and all happiness; take away sin, and then make way for all good?

By their rejection of the gospel, and their indignation at its being preached to the gentiles, the Jews were become enemies to God; yet in regard to the original election of that people in Abraham, they are still to be favoured for the sake of their pious fathers. God will, in his persevering love and kindness to that race, show that however he is said, speaking after the manner of men, to repent of his threatenings and judgments; yet he never repents, nor is said to do so, of his special gifts or distinguished favours, promised to fallen man. They are beloved for the fathers' sakes, ver. 28. Deut. 4. 37. And the same love would revive their privileges, for still the ancient loving-kindness is remembered. Kindness to the children for the fathers' sake, is called the kindness of God, 2 Sam. 9. 3, 7. Though, as concerning the gospel, that is, in the present dispensation of it, they are enemies to it for the sake of the gentiles, against whom they have such antipathy; yet when God's time is come, that will no longer exist, and God's love to their fathers will be remembered. See Lev. 26. 42. Many have the better for the sake of their godly ancestors. Upon this account the church is called their own olive-tree. Long it had been their own peculiar; which encourages us to believe there may be room for them in it again.

As the gentiles, who once had no

knowledge of God, at length obtained mercy through the unbelief of the jews, and by means of preachers of that nation, even to the unbelieving jews might at length obtain mercy through the mercy shown to the gentiles, and at length receive the gospel from them, and preachers raised up among them. That through your mercy they might obtain mercy, ver. 31. It is concluded that the believing gentiles would endeavour to work upon the jews. True grace seeks not to confine God's favour. Those who have found mercy themselves, should endeavour that through their mercy others also may obtain mercy. Both had, respectively, been left in unbelief, shut up as in a prison, for an appointed time, that at length God might have mercy on them all, by bringing both jews and gentiles, even all nations, to the knowledge of his salvation by faith in Jesus Christ. He will have mercy upon all, ver. 32. Not every individual person, but the body of the people. Not that they should be restored to have their priesthood, and temple, and ceremonies again; an end is put to all these; but they should be brought to believe in Christ, the true Messiah, whom they crucified, and be incorporated in the christian church, and become one sheep-fold with the gentiles, under Christ the Great Shepherd.

If God had mercy on gentiles who were outcasts from his favour, and strangers to the covenant of his promise, shall he not have mercy on the people whom he has always distinguished as being peculiarly his own, by the bestowment of many important privileges and advantages upon them?—(97.)

O that the blessed time were come when all Israel shall be saved; when the Deliverer, who is long since come out of Zion, shall turn away iniquity from Jacob; and the fulness of the gentiles be come in; so that from the rising to the going down of the sun, the Lord shall be one, and his name one! Our faith waits the glorious event, but it shall be seen, for the gifts and callings of God are without repentance. Let our assured confidence in the Divine promise travel on, as it were, to the accomplishment, over the mountains of difficulty that may be in our way; and let our hearts be cheered with this happy prospect, under all the grief they feel,

when we see how few now believe the report of the gospel, and to how few God hath revealed his arm.—(98.)

God's dealings with his creatures appear very different, when viewed in detached parts, from what they will do, when seen as a glorious whole. The captivities of Israel, their dispersion and exclusion from the church, are emblems of the believer's corrections and rebukes: for transgressions; and the continued care of the Lord towards that people, and the final mercy and blessed restoration which appear intended for them, show the persevering patience and victorious love of God, to those whom he has chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, and whom he finally will save for his sake.

26. *Whitby* discourages at considerable length on the conversion of the jews, that they shall be received again into favour though now cast off. And since God will send a Deliverer out of Zion to procure the pardon of his people's sins, and as pardon can only be given through faith in Christ, this Deliverer must be that Jesus who saves his people from their sins. If it imports that God would take away the punishment of their iniquity, that being the blindness and spiritual slumber which was then, and still is upon them, the removal of it must signify their conversion, this blindness being only then to be taken away, when they shall turn to the Lord, 2 Cor. 3 14—16. *Whitby* notices this chapter as speaking of a double harvest of the gentiles, the first, called their riches, ver. 12, as consisting in preaching the gospel to all nations, whereby they were happily enriched with Divine knowledge and grace; the second, the bringing in their fulness, which expresses a more glorious conversion of many to the true faith of christians in the latter age, which may be occasioned, or furthered by the conversion of the jews.

31. Surely the preservation of the jews, in the providence of God, notwithstanding all their affliction, to be a people distinguished, not only in name and apparel, but in customs, ceremonies, religion, from all other nations, argues that God hath some good purpose towards them, for we see other nations quite extinguished, especially for their distinction from other people.—*Parr.*

Ver. 33—36. The apostle having insisted upon reconciling the rejection of the jews with the Divine goodness, gave no countenance either to those who arrogantly attempt to reduce all things within the measure of their own intellect, and would believe no more than their limited understandings can comprehend; nor to those who speculate without end, and would argue of unrevealed causes and consequences. Instead of these he closes with admiring and acknowledging

the Divine wisdom and sovereignty. He, with affection and awe, adores,

1. The secrecy of the Divine counsels; O the depth! in these proceedings towards the jews and gentiles; or, in general, the whole mystery of the gospel, which we cannot fully comprehend. The riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God, the abundant instances of his wisdom and knowledge, in our redemption by Christ; a depth which the angels desire to look into, 1 Pet. 1. 12. Much more may it puzzle any human understanding to give account of the methods, reasons, designs, and extent of it. Paul was as well acquainted with the mysteries of the kingdom of God as ever any man was; yet he confesses himself at a loss; and despairing to find the bottom, he humbly sits down at the brink, and adores the depth. Those who know most in this state of imperfection, are most sensible of their own weakness, and that after all their searches, and all their attainments in those searches, they cannot order their speech by reason of darkness. The depth of the riches. Men's riches of all kinds are shallow; you may soon see the bottom; but God's riches are deep, Ps. 36. 6. There is not only depth in the Divine counsels, but riches; which denotes abundance of that which is precious and valuable. So complete are the Divine counsels, they have not only depth and height, but breadth and length, Eph. 3. 18, and that passing knowledge, ver. 19. Riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God. His seeing all things by one clear, and certain, and infallible view; all things that are, or ever were, or ever shall be; that all is naked and open before him; there is his knowledge. His ruling and ordering all things, directing and disposing them to his own glory, and bringing about his own purposes and counsels in all; that is his wisdom. The depth is past our fathoming, and we may soon be lost in the contemplation. Such knowledge is too wonderful for men, Ps. 139. 6.

How unsearchable are his judgments! that is, his counsels and purposes; and his ways, that is, the execution of these counsels and purposes. We know not what God designs; and when his providence has begun to work, we know not what God has in view; it is past finding out. This not only overturns all our positive

conclusions about the Divine counsels, but it also checks all our curious inquiries. Secret things belong not to us, Deut. 29. 29. We cannot give a reason of God's proceedings, nor by searching find out God. See Job 5. 9; 9. 10. The judgments of his mouth, and the way of our duty, blessed be God, are plain and easy; but the judgments of his hands, and the ways of his providence, are dark and mysterious, which therefore we must silently adore. The apostle speaks especially with reference to casting off the jews, and entertaining the gentiles, with a purpose to take in the jews again in due time. The choosing some, the refusing others: neither were according to the probabilities of human conjecture. Even so, Father, because it seemed good in thy sight. God leaves no marks or footsteps behind him, his paths of providence are new every morning; he does not go the same way so often as to make a track of it. It follows, ver. 34. For who hath known the mind of the Lord? Is there any creature made of his council, as Christ was? Is there any to whom he has imparted his counsels, or that is able, upon the view of his providences, to know the way he takes? There is that vast distance and disproportion between God and man, between the Creator and the creature, which for ever excludes such intimacy and familiarity.

The apostle makes the same demand, 1 Cor. 2. 16. For who hath known the mind of the Lord? And there he adds, But we have the mind of Christ; which intimates, that, through Christ, true believers, who have his Spirit, know so much of the mind of God as is necessary to their happiness. Or, who has been his counsellor? He needs no counsellor, for he is infinitely wise; nor is any creature capable of being his counsellor. It is the substance of God's challenge to Job concerning the creation, Job 38, and is applicable to all the methods of his providence. What man shall teach God how to govern the world?

2. The apostle adores the sovereignty of the Divine counsels. God acts as he will, and gives not account of any of his matters, Job 23. 13; 33. 13, yet there is no unrighteousness with him. Who hath first given to him? Who of all the creatures, can prove God is beholden to him? Whatever we do for him, or

devote to him, it must be with that acknowledgment, which is for ever a bar to such demands. Of thine own we have given thee, 1 Chron. 29. 14. All the duties we can perform, are not requitals, but restitutions at best. Who has rendered Him any service previous to having received so much from him as to be bound by the strongest obligations to devote all to him. It is certain God will let no one lose by him; but no one yet could make a demand of this kind. This silences the clamours of the jews. When God took away their visible church privileges from them, he did but take his own. It silences likewise the insultings of the gentiles. When God sent the gospel among them, and gave so many grace and wisdom to accept it, this was not because he owed them favour, but of his own good pleasure.

The apostle resolves all into the sovereignty of God, ver. 36. For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things; God is all in all. All things in heaven and earth, especially those things which relate to our salvation, the things that belong to our peace. They are all of him by way of creation, *through* him by way of providential influence; that they may be to him in their final tendency and result. Of God, as the Spring and Fountain of all; through Christ, God-man, as the conveyance; to God, as the ultimate end. These include all God's relations to his creatures; all be of Him, and through Him, all should be to Him, and for Him. In one way or another all shall proclaim or display the glory of his perfections, and the honour of his great name. To whom be glory for ever, Amen. Thus all God's works praise him, but his saints bless him actively; they express that praise to him, for which all the creatures furnish occasion, Ps. 145. 10.

He had been discoursing at large of the counsels of God concerning man, but he concludes with acknowledging the Divine sovereignty, as that into which all these things must be ultimately resolved, and in which alone the mind can safely and sweetly rest. This is yet the christian way of disputation. Whatever begins, let God's glory be the conclusion; especially when we talk of the Divine counsels and actings, it is best for us to turn our arguments into awful and serious adorations. The glorified saints, who see furthest into these mys-

teries, never dispute, but praise to eternity. Instead of perplexing our minds about secret things, let us walk in the light which the Lord has graciously afforded us; and conscious of our inability to comprehend his deep designs, let us adore the depth of the riches of his wisdom and knowledge, whose judgments are not to be searched, nor his ways traced out; whose mind none can penetrate or comprehend; who needs and regards no counsellor; who first gives life and breath and all things to every one; and to whom none can render any thing which he has not first received from Him.

The whole mystery of the call of the gentiles, the rejection of the unbelieving jews, and the final conversion of their posterity in the last ages, is here fully and explicitly set forth. The jews were rejected of God, because they rejected and crucified the Messiah. But, when the fulness of the gentiles shall have arrived, or, as our Lord expresses it, when the times of the gentiles shall be fulfilled; that is to say, when the times of the four great monarchies of the gentiles shall have expired, and when the three times and a half shall have come to their close; then shall the natural branches, no longer abiding in unbelief, be grafted into the good olive tree of the church.—Faber.

CHAPTER XII.

The apostle proceeds to a practical improvement of the foregoing doctrine, in exhortations of believers to a holy dedication of themselves to God, ver. 1, 2. To an humble opinion of themselves, and a modest behaviour towards others, 3—5. To a faithful use of the spiritual gifts, which God had bestowed upon some of them, in their respective stations, 6—8. And to various duties, that were incumbent upon private christians among them, such as love and kindness, zeal, hope, patience, and prayer, 9—12. Hospitality and meekness, sympathy and condescension, 13—16. And an honourable and peaceable conduct towards all men, together with forbearance and benevolence towards injurious enemies, 17—21.

Ver. 1, 2. The apostle having closed the doctrinal and argumentative part of his epistle, which is throughout practically applied, here urges important duties from gospel principles. He entreated the Romans, as his brethren in Christ, "by the mercies of God," to show the sincerity of their love, and to honour the gospel by presenting their bodies as a living sacrifice to Him. This is an argument most sweetly powerful. There is the mercy that

is in God, and the mercy that is from God; mercy in the spring, and mercy in the streams: both are included here. God is a merciful God, therefore let us present our bodies to him; he knows how to consider their frames, for he is of infinite compassion. We receive from him every day the fruits of his mercy; particularly mercy to our bodies; he made them, he maintains them, he bought them. It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed; that our souls are held in life: and the greatest mercy of all is, that Christ gave himself for us, and gives himself to us. Surely we cannot but study what we shall render to the Lord for all this. And what shall we render?—Let us render ourselves; all we are, all we have, all we can do; after all, what return is it for such very rich receivings? The body must be presented to him a living sacrifice: alluding to the living animals, presented before the altar, ready to be offered as sacrifices under the law. There were sacrifices of atonement, and sacrifices of acknowledgment. Christ is the only sacrifice of atonement, who was once offered to bear the sins of many; but our persons and performances, tendered to God through Christ our Priest, are as sacrifices of acknowledgment. The presenting the body to God, implies not only avoiding sins committed with or against the body, but using the body in the service of God, 1 Cor. 6. 20. To engage our bodies in the duties of immediate worship, and our particular callings, and to be willing to suffer for God with our bodies, if called to it. It is to yield the members of our bodies, as instruments of righteousness, chap. 6. 13. A body sincerely devoted to God is a living sacrifice. Many heathens offered human sacrifices to their idol-gods, not living, but slain sacrifices: but God will have mercy, and not such sacrifice, though life is forfeited to him. A living sacrifice, inspired with the spiritual life of the soul. It is Christ living in the soul by faith, that makes the body a living sacrifice, Gal. 2. 20. Holy love kindles the sacrifices, puts life into the duties. They must be holy; as the vessels of the tabernacle were holy, being devoted to God's service. The soul is the proper subject of holiness; but a sanctified soul communicates holiness to the body which it animates,

It is acceptable to God. The great end we should all labour after, is, to be accepted of the Lord, 2 Cor. 5. 9, to have him well pleased with our persons and performances. It is God's great condescension, that he will vouchsafe to accept any thing in us; and if presenting ourselves will please him, we cannot bestow ourselves better. It is our reasonable service. There is reason in it. God must be served in the spirit, and with the understanding. God does not impose upon us any thing hard or unreasonable, but what is altogether agreeable to the principles of right reason. That is a reasonable service, which we are able and ready to give a reason for, and which we understand. God deals with us as with rational creatures. Thus must the body be presented to God.

Conversion and sanctification are the renewing of the mind, ver. 2, a change not of the substance, but the qualities of the soul. It is the same with making a new heart, and a new spirit; new dispositions and inclinations; the understanding enlightened, the conscience softened, the thoughts rectified, the will bowed to the will of God, and the affections made spiritual and heavenly. Thus the man is not what he was; old things are passed away, all things are become new; he acts from new principles, by new rules, with new designs. The mind is the acting, ruling part of us, so that the renewing it is the renewing of the whole man, Prov. 4. 23. The progress of sanctification, dying to sin more and more, and living to righteousness more and more, is the carrying on this renewing work, till it is perfected in glory. The great enemy to this renewal is, conformity to this world; Be not conformed to this world. Do not fashion yourselves according to the world.

Take heed of forming schemes for happiness, as though it lay in the things of this world, ver. 2, which soon pass away. Take heed of compliance with the spirit and temper of the carnal and worldly, and of being moulded into their courses and fashions, conversation and manners. Do not fall in with the customs of those who walk in the lusts of the flesh, and mind earthly things. Let it be the earnest governing desire and pursuit of your souls, in prayer to God, and in the use of all means of his appointment, and the improvement of christian graces and

privileges, that ye may be metamorphosed, or changed into a directly contrary, better, and more glorious and abiding form, in the renewal of the heart, still more and more by the Holy Spirit. This may be called the renewing of the mind, because the gracious and effectual work of the Holy Ghost first begins in the understanding, and is carried on by further influence, under its illumination, to the will, affections, and conversation, till there is a thorough change of the whole man into the image of God, in knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness. Let this be our principal aim, that we may experimentally know, and be capable of proving and recommending to others, the truth, excellence, and importance of the will of God, revealed in his word, with regard to what is good in itself and for us—with regard to what is well-pleasing in his sight through Jesus Christ—and with regard to what is sufficient to make a finished christian, thoroughly furnished unto good works. The apostle here places the perfection of the gospel revelation with respect to moral duties, as well as the grounds of their acceptance with God, in opposition to judaism on the one hand, and gentilism on the other.—(82.)

The transformation of the soul by the renewing of the Holy Ghost, produces so holy a judgment and taste, and such heavenly affections, that it will readily show us in what respects we must avoid conformity to the world. It will keep us at a distance both from useless singularities, and from timid, carnal, dishonourable compliances. But, if the world possesses a large share in the heart, some excuses will be offered for indulging favourite inclinations. Yet experience will convince us how good and pleasant is the acceptable and perfect will of the Lord. A living principle of grace is in the soul, as far as it prevails, an unbiassed, unprejudiced, judgment concerning the things of God. It disposes the soul to receive and entertain the revelations of the Divine will. The promise is, If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, John 7. 17. An instructed understanding can dispute and distinguish about the will of God; while an honest, humble heart, that has spiritual senses exercised, and is delivered into the mould of God's word, loves it, and practises it, and has the

savour of it. Thus, to be godly, is to surrender ourselves to God.

1. The animals offered in sacrifices were to be without blemish or spot, Lev. 22. 20-24.

Ver. 3-5. While acknowledging the distinguishing favour shown to him in his call to be the apostle of the gentiles, St. Paul charges the Romans to beware of spiritual pride. Let no one, however eminent for rank or abilities, think of himself more highly than is consistent for a sinner, saved by grace alone. Pride is a sin innate in us, we need to be cautioned and armed against it. We must take heed of putting too high a value upon our own judgments, abilities, persons, or performances. We must have a low and modest opinion of our abilities, our gifts and graces, according to what we have received from God, and not otherwise. We must not be confident and hot in matters of doubtful disputation; not judge and censure those that differ from us: not desire to make a fair show in the flesh. We must not covet to be wise above what is written. There is a knowledge that puffs up, which reaches after forbidden fruit. We must seek after that knowledge which tends to sobriety, to rectify the heart, and reform the life. Whatever we have that is good, God has given it to us; every good and perfect gift comes from above, James 1. 17. When thinking of ourselves, we must think how kind God hath been to us, for it is he who gives us power to do any thing that is good. Others have their gifts as well as ourselves, therefore it ill becomes us to despise others. This is illustrated by a comparison from the members of the natural body. Observe, all the saints make up one body in Christ, who is the Head of the body, and the common centre of their unity. Believers are united to one common Head, and actuated and animated by one common Spirit. Particular believers are members of this body, parts, which speaks them less than the whole, and to be in relation to the whole, deriving life and spirits from the head, each according to its proportion.

All the members have not the same office, ver. 4, but each has its respective place and work assigned. In the mystical body, some are qualified for, and called to one sort of work; others are, in like manner, fitted for, and called to another sort of work. We are not only

members of Christ, but members one of another, ver. 5. We are engaged to do all the good we can one to another, and for the common benefit. We must not be contented of our own attainments, because, whatever we have, as we received it, so we received it not for ourselves only, but for the good of others. If we duly considered our endowments, and how far we have come short of proper improvement of them, all would humble us; we should be covered with shame for not having improved them better.

Ver. 6—8. As we must not be proud of our talents, so we must take heed lest, under a pretence of humility and self-denial, we are slothful in laying out ourselves for the good of others. We must not say, "I am nothing, therefore I will sit still, and do nothing;" but, "I am nothing in myself, and therefore I will lay out myself to the utmost in the strength of the grace of Christ." Having then gifts, let us use them. Authority and ability for the ministerial work are the gift of God. Gifts differing, ver. 6. The immediate design is different, though the ultimate tendency of all is the same. According to the grace. The free grace of God is the spring and origin of all gifts given to men. It is grace that appoints the office, qualifies and inclines the person, works both to will and to do. There were in the primitive church extraordinary gifts of tongues, of discerning, of healing; but the apostle speaks here of those that are ordinary. Prophecy,—not the extraordinary gifts of foretelling things to come, but preaching the word. Preaching refers to the eternal condition of the children of men, it points directly at a future state. As to the manner of prophesying, it must be according to the proportion of the grace of faith. Let him that preaches, set all the faith he hath on work, to impress the truths he preaches upon his own heart in the first place.

As to the matter of our prophesying, it must be according to the proportion of the doctrine of faith, as revealed in the holy scriptures of the Old and New Testament. Truths that are more dark, must be examined by those that are more clear; and entertained, when they are found to agree and comport with the analogy of faith; for it is certain, one truth can never contradict another. Let

him that teacheth, wait on teaching. Let him be frequent, and constant, and diligent in it. Let him that exhorteth, wait on exhortation. Let him apply gospel truths and rules closely to the case and condition of the people, and press upon them that which is most practical. Many who are very accurate in teaching, may yet be very cold and unskilful in exhorting; and the contrary. Now where these gifts are evidently separated, it conduces to edification to divide the work accordingly. Ministry:—this includes all the offices which concern the outward business of the house of God. See Neh. 11. 16; Acts 6. 2. Let those on whom this care of ministering is devolved, attend to it with faithfulness and diligence. Some understand it in general of all almsgiving; he that hath let him give, and plentifully and liberally. God loves a cheerful giver.

He that ruleth, with diligence. It denotes both care and industry to discover what is amiss, to bring back those that go astray, to reprove and admonish those that are fallen. Those must take a great deal of pains, that will approve themselves faithful in the discharge of this trust. He that showeth mercy, with cheerfulness. Let them be willing to it, and take a pleasure in it. It seems to be meant particularly of those whose work it was to take care of the sick and strangers. Now this must be done with cheerfulness. A pleasing countenance in acts of mercy is a great relief and comfort to the miserable; when they see help given, not grudgingly and unwillingly, but with pleasant looks and gentle words, and all possible indications of readiness and alacrity. They who have to do with those who are sick and sore, and frequently cross and peevish, have need to put on not only patience, but cheerfulness, to make the work the more easy and pleasant to them, and the more acceptable to God. We are apt to neglect the glory of God, and our duty as members of the body of Christ, to indulge emulation, ambition, contests for precedence, contempt of others, and discontent with our proper place and service. Let us watch and pray against these evils; and whatever our gifts or situations may be, let us endeavour to employ our talents, humbly, diligently, cheerfully, and in simplicity; not seeking our own credit or profit, but

the good of many, both temporal and eternal.

6. The proportion, or as the original word is, the analogy, of faith, may be defined to be "that proportion which the doctrines of the gospel bear to each other, or the close connexion between the truths of revealed religion."—*T. H. Horne. Guyse*, with others, considers that not merely miraculous and extraordinary, but also such ordinary spiritual gifts are here meant, as are needful in all ages for the edification and advancement of the church.

Ver. 9-12. The apostle next exhorts that the professed love of christians towards each other should be sincere, free from dissimulation, and unmeaning and deceitful compliments. They are to avoid all counterfeit show of affection. Depending on Divine grace, they must learn habitually to detest and dread all kinds of evil, to love and delight in whatever is kind and useful, notwithstanding opposition or temptation. Abhor that which is evil, cleave to that which is good, ver. 9. God has showed us what is good; these christian duties here enjoined: and that is evil, which is opposite to them. We must not only not do evil, but we must abhor that which is evil. We must hate sin; have antipathy to it as the worst of evils, hating all the appearances of sin. We must not only do that which is good, but we must cleave to it. It denotes deliberate choice, sincere affection to, and constant perseverance in that which is good. So cleave to it, as not to be allured or affrighted from it; cleave to Him who is good, even to the Lord, Acts 11. 23, with dependence and acquiescence. It is subjoined to the precept of brotherly love, as directing it; we must love our brethren, but not love them so much as for their sakes to commit any sin, or omit any duty; not think the less of any sin for the sake of the person that commits it, but forsake all the friends in the world to cleave to God and duty.

All our duty towards one another is summed up in one word, love. There is mutual love that christians owe, affectionate love. Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love, ver. 10. It properly denotes the love of parents to their children; which is the most tender and the most natural of any other; unforced, unconstrained. This kind affection puts us to express ourselves both in word and action with courtesy one to another. Honour prefer-

ring one another; forward to give others the pre eminence. We should be forward to notice the gifts and graces, and performances of our brethren, and to value them accordingly; be more forward to praise another, and more pleased to hear another praised than ourselves. Let all your contention be, which shall be most humble, and useful, and condescending, not indulging in ease and slothfulness. Therefore it is immediately added, ver. 11, Not slothful in business. There is business of the world, that of our particular calling, in which we must not be slothful, 1 Thess. 4. 11. But this seems to be the serving the Lord, Luke 2. 49. Those who would prove themselves christians must make religion their business, must choose it, learn it, and give themselves to it; must love it, and employ themselves in it. And we must not be slothful in it; not desire our own ease, and consult that, when it comes in competition with our duty. It would ennoble every business, and be acceptable to God, and redound to the credit of the gospel, if every christian acquitted himself better than other men in the business he undertook. Love to God and man, with zeal for the gospel, will influence the wise christian to be diligent in all his worldly business, and in acquiring superior skill.

We must be fervent in spirit; serving the Lord, ver. 11. God must be served with the spirit, under the influences of the Holy Spirit. Whatever we do in religion, it is pleasing to God no further than it is done with our spirits wrought upon by the Spirit of God. And there must be fervency in the spirit; holy zeal, warmth, and ardency of affection in all we do: as those that love God with all our hearts and all our souls. Rejoicing in hope. God is honoured by our hope and trust in him, especially when we rejoice in that hope; this shows that we are assured of the reality, and esteem the excellency of the good we hope for. Patient in tribulation. God is served, not only by working for him when he calls us to work, but by sitting still quietly when he calls us to suffer. Patience for God's sake, and with reference to his will and glory, is true piety. Those that rejoice in hope, are likely to be patient in tribulation. A believing prospect of the joy set before us, bears up the spirit under all outward

pressure. Continuing instant in prayer. It signifies both fervency and perseverance in prayer. We should not be cold in the duty, nor soon weary of it.

10. Or, "Delight in the tenderest fraternal affection to each other." The word rendered, "kindly affectioned," not only signifying a strong affection, like that of parent animals to their offspring, but delight in it.—*Doddridge*.

Ver. 13-16. Not only is kindness to friends and brethren inculcated, but christians must not harbour resentment against their enemies. Distributing to the necessities of saints, ver. 13. It is but mock love, which rests in verbal expressions of kindness and respect, while the wants of our brethren call for real supplies, and it is in our power to furnish them. Observe, It is no strange thing for saints in this world to want necessities for the support of their natural lives. In the primitive times, prevailing persecutions reduced many suffering saints to great extremities; and still, the poor, even the poor saints, we have always with us. Surely the things of this world are not the best things; if they were, the saints would not have so little of them. It is the duty of those who have wherewithal, to distribute, or (as it might better be read) to communicate to those necessities. It is not enough to draw out the soul, but we must draw out the purse, to the hungry. See James 2. 15, 16; 1 John 3. 17. We must be ready, as we have ability and opportunity, to relieve any that are in want; but we are in a special manner bound to communicate to the saints. There is a common love owing to our fellow-creatures, but special love owing to our fellow-christians, Gal. 6. 10. Given to hospitality; ready to entertain those who go about doing good, or who, for fear of persecution, are forced to wander for shelter. Nor is this yet a superseded duty; as there is occasion, we must welcome strangers.

Bless them which persecute you, ver. 14. Persecution has been the common lot of God's people, but we are here taught to bless those that so persecute us. Bless them; speak well of them. If there be any thing in them commendable and praiseworthy, notice it, and mention it to their honour. Speak respectfully to them, not rendering railing for railing, and bitterness for bitterness: wish well to them, desire their good, by

prayer for them. Bless, and curse not. It denotes thorough good will; not, Bless them when at prayer, and curse them at other times; but, Bless them always, and curse not at all. Cursing becomes not those whose work it is to bless God, and whose happiness it is to be blessed of him.

Rejoice with them that rejoice, and weep with them that weep, ver. 15. True christian love will interest us in the sorrows and joys of each other. Not that we are to participate in the sinful mirth or mournings of any, but in just and reasonable joys and sorrows: not envying those that prosper, but rejoicing with them; truly glad that others have the success and comfort which we have not; not despising those in trouble, but being ever ready to help them.

Be of the same mind one toward another, ver. 16, labour as much as you can, to agree in the same way of thinking; and when you come short of that, yet agree in affection; endeavour to be all one, not affecting to contradict one another; but keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, wishing the same good to others that you do to yourselves. True love cannot be without lowliness. Our Lord Jesus washed his disciples' feet, John 13. 5, 14, 34; it intimates that to love one another aright, is to be willing to stoop to the meanest offices of kindness for the good of one another. Mind not high things. Be not ambitious of honour and preferment, nor look upon worldly pomp and dignity with value or desire, but rather with holy contempt. The Roman christians lived near the court, and daily saw the gaiety and grandeur of it. The apostle says, Do not mind it, be not in love with it.

Condescend to men of low estate. If our condition in the world be poor and low, our enjoyments coarse and scanty, our employments despised, yet we must bring our minds to it. Be contented with mean things. Be reconciled to the place which God in his providence hath put us in, whatever it be. We must account nothing below us, but sin: be content with mean habitations, mean fare, mean clothing, mean accommodations, when they are our lot. We should make a low condition and mean circumstances more the centre of our desires, than a high condition. We must associate with,

and accommodate ourselves to those who are poor and mean in the world, if they fear God. He adds, Be not wise in your own conceits. We shall never find in our hearts to condescend to others, while we indulge a conceit of ourselves; and therefore, that must needs be mortified. Be not confident of the sufficiency of your own wisdom, so as to despise others, or think you have no need of them.

Ver. 17—21. Not only is love to our friends taught, but also to our enemies. Since men became enemies to God, they have been found very ready to be enemies one to another. And of all men, those that embrace religion have reason to expect to meet with enemies in a world whose smiles seldom concur with Christ's. Now, christianity teaches us how to behave towards our enemies; and in this instruction quite differs from all other rules and methods, which aim at victory and dominion; but this at inward peace and satisfaction. Whoever wish us ill, and seek to do us ill, our rule is, to do them no hurt, but all the good we can. Recompense to no man evil for evil, ver. 17. That is a brutish recompense, befitting only those animals, which are not conscious either of any being above them, or of any state before them. To no man; not to one that has been thy friend, for by recompensing evil for evil, thou wilt certainly lose him; not to one that has been thine enemy, for by not recompensing evil for evil, thou mayest perhaps gain him. Providethings honest in the sight of all men, ver. 18, not only do, but study and take care to do, that which is amiable and creditable, and recommends religion to all with whom you converse.

As much as lies in us, we are to live peaceably with all men, ver. 18. Even those with whom we cannot live intimately and familiarly, by reason of distance in degree or profession; yet we must with such live peaceably, not giving others occasion to quarrel with us, and not taking occasion to quarrel with them. Study the things that make for peace; if it be possible. It is not possible to preserve peace, when we cannot do it without offending God and wounding conscience. The wisdom that is from above is first pure, and then peaceable, James 3. 17. As much as lieth in you. We can but speak for ourselves. We

may be unavoidably striven with, and that we cannot help; our care must be that nothing is wanting on our parts to preserve the peace.

Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, ver. 19. Surely this should compose angry spirits, that are hot in resentment of a provocation. Would you pacify a brother offended? A soft word, fitly spoken, may turn away wrath. Avenge not yourselves; when any one has done you any ill turn, do not desire or endeavour to bring the like mischief or inconvenience upon them. It is not forbidden to the magistrate to right those that are wronged, by punishing the wrong-doer; or to make and execute just and wholesome laws against malefactors: but it forbids private revenge; and this is fitly forbidden, for we are not competent judges in our own case. Even if persons wronged, in seeking the defence of the law, and magistrates in granting it, act from anger and malice, and not from concern that peace and order be maintained, and right done; such proceedings are this forbidden self-revenging. See Matt. 5. 38—40. This is a hard lesson to corrupt nature, therefore a remedy against it is added; Give place unto wrath. Not to our own wrath; to give place to that, is to give place to the devil, Eph. 4. 26, 27. We must resist and suppress that. But as to the wrath of our enemy, give place to it, be of a yielding temper; do not answer wrath with wrath, but with love. When a man's passion is up, and the stream is strong, let it pass off; lest it be made to rage the more against us. When others are angry, let us be calm; this is a remedy against revenge. Here is a reason against it; It is written, Vengeance is mine. See Deut. 32. 35. God is the sovereign King, the righteous Judge, and to him it belongs to administer justice; for, being a God of infinite knowledge, by him actions are weighed in unerring balances; and, being a God of infinite purity, he hates sin. We should not avenge ourselves; for if vengeance be God's, then we may not do it. If we do, we take his work out of his hand. And we need not do it; for God will avenge us as far as is right; and further we cannot desire.

We must not only not hurt our enemies, but our religion also teaches us to do them all the good we can. It is a

command peculiar to christianity, and which highly commends it; Love your enemies, Matt. 5. 44. We are here taught to show love to them, both in word and deed. If thine enemy hunger, ver. 20, be ready and forward to show him kindness, and do any office of love for his good; and be not the less forward for his having been thine enemy, but rather the more, that thou mayest thereby testify the sincerity of thy forgiving of him. We must do good to our enemies. If he hunger, do not say, "Now God is avenging me of him, and pleading my cause;" do not make such a construction of his wants; but feed him. Then, when he has need of thine help, and thou hast an opportunity of starving him, and trampling upon him, then feed him.

Why must this be done? Because in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Thou shalt either, 1. Melt him into repentance and friendship, and soften his spirit toward thee; alluding to those who melt metals; they not only put fire under them, but heap fire upon them: thus Saul was melted and conquered with the kindness of David, 1 Sam. 24. 16; 26. 21; or, 2. It will make his malice the more inexcusable. The line of our duty is clearly marked out, and if our enemies are not melted down by persevering kindness, we are not to seek vengeance, they will be consumed by the fiery wrath of that God to whom vengeance belongeth.

The last verse suggests what is not easily understood by the world; that in all strife and contention, those that revenge are conquered; and those that forgive are conquerors. Be not overcome of evil. Let not the evil of any provocation that is given you, have such power over you, or make such impression upon you, as to dispossess you of yourselves, to disturb your peace, to destroy your love, to discompose your spirits, or to bring you to study or endeavour any revenge. He that cannot quietly bear an injury, is conquered by it. But overcome evil with good; with the good of patience and forbearance, nay, and of kindness to those that wrong you. Learn to defeat their ill designs against you, either to change them, or to preserve your own peace. He that hath this rule over his spirit, is better than the mighty.

Farr says, It is surely a most comfortable thing when a man under wrongs

offered to him, can so quell his passion as to abstain from revenge, and instead thereof to do good. When a man has done wrong, it is comfortable to be forgiven; but to be able to forgive, and to do an enemy good—I appeal to God's children, if it be not most sweet unto them, that God so enables them by his Spirit, for which they more rejoice before God, than in all outward riches.

CHAPTER XIII.

The apostle states the duty of subjection to civil government, with several reasons to enforce it, ver. 1-7. And then returns to exhortations to mutual love, 8-10. And to temperance and sobriety, 11-14.

Ver. 1-7. We are here taught what should be our conduct toward magistrates, and those in authority over us; called here, the higher powers. The grace of the gospel directs our thoughts to the providence of God, as well as to his promises and commands; thus it teaches submission and quiet, where pride and the carnal mind only see causes for murmuring and discontent. Whatever the persons themselves may be, yet the just power which they have must be submitted to and obeyed.

1. The duty enjoined; let every soul be subject. Every one. Not that our consciences are to be subjected to the will of any man. It is God's prerogative to make laws to bind the consciences of men, and we must render to God the things that are God's. The subjection of soul here required, includes inward honour, 1 Pet. 2. 17, and outward reverence and respect, both in speaking to rulers and in speaking of them; obedience to their commands in things lawful and honest, and conformity to the place and duty of subjects in all things, bringing our minds to act according to our relation and condition. They are higher powers; be content they should be so, and submit to them accordingly.

Our Lord Jesus was reproached as a disturber, though he declared his kingdom was not of this world: no marvel then, if his followers have been loaded with the like calumnies; called factious, seditious, and turbulent, and looked upon as the troublemakers of the land. But here the apostle shows that obedience to civil magistrates is one of the laws of Christ, whose religion helps to make

people good subjects. The jews scrupled to obey heathen magistrates ; this gave occasion to turbulent spirits to excite insurrections ; the same spirit might creep in among christians to the disgrace of the gospel. Lest their liberty should be turned into licentiousness, and misconstrued to countenance faction and rebellion, the apostle enjoins obedience to civil government ; which was the more necessary to be pressed, because the magistrates were heathens and unbelievers ; which yet did not destroy their civil power and authority. The higher powers in Rome were not only heathens, but persecuting and oppressive ; and Nero, then emperor, was a monster of cruelty and wickedness, yet no exception is made on that account. It is evident the apostle did not mean to determine the divine right of any particular form of government, but to inculcate subjection to the ruling powers of every place and time in which believers lived. The benefits of civil government are very many and great, and it is the appointment of God for maintaining order among the apostate and selfish race of men. Christians in private stations have not much concern with political matters ; yet complicated cases may arise in which no previous rules or counsels can give us adequate direction. But to claim the protection of the law against illegal violence of magistrates is not resisting the powers that be ; and the apostle is not here writing on political duties, but teaching christians their duty. All the crimes committed by usurpers and oppressors, are most severely condemned in scripture ; holy men of old were frequently commissioned to protest against their conduct, and the apostle himself, when before Felix, reasoned with him of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come.

In the general course of human affairs, rulers are not a terror to honest, quiet, and good subjects, but to evil doers, ver. 3. Such is the power of sin and corruption, that many will not be restrained from enormities, most pernicious to human society, by regard to the law of God and fear of the wrath to come, but only by the fear of temporal punishments, which the wilfulness and perverseness of degenerate mankind have made necessary. Do that which is good,

ver. 3, and thou needest not be afraid of the powers, which in general cases may be looked on as the ministers of Providence for good, in defending persons, property, and habitations, from the violence of wicked men. But if required by human authority to sin against God, we must steadfastly refuse obedience, and cheerfully endure the consequence, satisfied with the blessings ensured by the promise of God to those who suffer for conscience sake. He is the minister of God to thee for good, ver. 4. Thou hast the benefit and advantage of the government, therefore do what thou canst to preserve it, and nothing to disturb it. If we have protection from the government, we owe subjection to it ; by upholding the government, we keep up our own hedge. If thou do that which is evil, which falls under the cognizance and censure of the civil magistrate, be afraid, for he beareth not the sword in vain. God has put a power into the magistrate's hand, intended for the restraining and suppressing of disorders.

The punishment of malefactors should be managed as an appointment of God, who, as a holy God, hates sin, against which a public testimony is thus borne. As the protector of the good. As one that desires not the eternal ruin of sinners, but that others may hear and fear, and do no more presumptuously. In this work the magistrate is the minister of God, to whom vengeance belongs ; and must take heed of infusing into his judgments any personal resentments of his own.

2. The reasons to enforce this duty. We must be subject. For wrath's sake. Because of the danger we run ourselves into by resistance. The least show of resistance or sedition in christians would soon be aggravated, and be very prejudicial to the whole society. They need to be exact in their subjection, that those who would take occasion against them in the matter of their God, may have no just occasion. They that resist shall receive to themselves condemnation, ver. 2. God will reckon with them for it, because the resistance reflects upon him ; the magistrate will reckon with them for it. We must be subject, not only for wrath, but for conscience sake : not so much from fear of punishment, as regard to God. Common

civil offices are acceptable to God, when they are done for conscience sake, with regard to God; to his providence putting us into such relations, and to his precept making subjection the duty of those relations. Thus the same things may be done from very different principles.

This is not applicable to the particular rights of kings and kingdoms, and the branches of constitutions; but it is intended for direction to private persons in their private capacity, to behave themselves quietly and peaceably in the sphere which God has set them in, with a due regard to the civil powers which God, in his providence, has set over them, 1 Tim. 2. 1, 2. It is an instance of God's wisdom, power, and goodness, in the management of mankind, that he has disposed them into such a state as distinguishes between governors and governed; and has not left them like the fishes of the sea, where the greater devour the less. He did herein consult the benefit of his creatures. For this cause pay you tribute; as a testimony of your submission, and an acknowledgment that in conscience you think it to be due, ver. 6. By paying tribute, you own the blessing of authority to yourselves; honour is a burden; and if the magistrate do as he ought, he is attending continually upon this very thing: for it is enough to take up all a man's thoughts and time. Christians must not use any collusion or fraud. All smuggling, dealing in contraband goods, withholding or evading duties, is rebellion against the express command of God. Thus also a conscientious neighbour is robbed, who will have to pay the more; and the atrocious crimes of smugglers, and others who combine with them, are abetted by all concerned in such dishonesty. It is painful that some professors of the gospel should countenance any such practices, which are contrary to truth and honesty. It is not said, You give it, but, You pay it as a just debt, or lend it to be repaid in all the blessings and advantages of public government, of which you reap the benefit. This is the lesson the apostle teaches, and it becomes all christians to learn and practise it, that the godly in the land may always be found, whatever others are, the quiet and the peaceable in the land.

Men often blame forms of government

for evils which are inseparable from fallen nature, and expect benefits from the change of forms or persons, which can only be produced by the renewing of men's hearts to the holy image of God, and the mortifying that inordinate self-love and idolatrous love of the world which are universal among mankind. Let, then, christians recollect that the whole world lieth in wickedness, that they are strangers and pilgrims in it; that their time here is short; and that it is their wisdom and duty to make the best of things as they find them, forwarding by their prayers and every consistent means, all fitting efforts to preserve, increase, or assist, the real welfare of mankind, and to check oppression over man under all circumstances.

1. The former chapter contains christian ethics, this, christian politics. There was great reason to insist upon the latter, as well as the former, since the primitive christians lay under the imputation of being enemies to the state. This might arise from many of them being jews, who scrupled subjection to a heathen yoke. And there were a set of licentious persons who bore the name of christians, that despised dominion, and spake evil of dignities; wherefore the apostle exhorts the christians of Rome, where the seat of government was, so to behave towards their superiors, that they might set a good example to christians in all parts of the empire.—*Gill*.

Ver. 8—10. Christians are under the highest obligations to pay all lawful demands, without needless delay. They must avoid useless expense, and carefully guard against contracting any debts they have not the power of discharging. They are also to stand aloof from all adventurous speculations and rash engagements, whatever may involve them in debt, and expose them to the danger of not rendering to all their due.

Owe no man any thing; do not continue in any one's debt, while you are able to pay it. Give every one his own. Do not spend that upon yourselves, which you owe to others. The wicked borroweth, and payeth not again, Ps. 37. 21. Many that are very sensible of the trouble, think little of the sin, of thus being in debt. Owe no man any thing, but to love one another; that debt must be always paying, yet always owing. It is enjoined as the principle and summary of all duty; for love is the fulfilling the law; not perfectly, but it is a good step towards it. It includes all the duties of the second table, ver. 9, and

those suppose the love of God. Surely we serve a good Master, who has summed up all our duty in one word, and that is the beauty and harmony of the universe: God is love, 1 John 4. 16, and love is his image upon the soul: where it is, the soul is well moulded, and the heart fitted for every good work. We have,

1. Particular precepts, ver. 9. The last five of the ten commandments are specified as all summed up in this royal law, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself; with the same sincerity that thou lovest thyself, though not in the same measure and degree. He that loves his neighbour as himself, will be desirous of the welfare of his neighbour. On this is built that golden rule, of doing as we would be done by. Were there no restraints of human laws in these things, no punishments incurred, which the malignity of human nature has made necessary, the law of love points out that it is needful to prevent all such wrongs and injuries, and to keep peace and good order among us. In the enumeration of these commandments, the seventh is put before the sixth, for it is really as great a violation of the law of love as killing and stealing; which shows that true brotherly love is love to the souls of our brethren in the first place. He that tempts others to sin, and defiles their minds and consciences, does really hate them.

2. A general rule is given concerning the nature of brotherly love; Love worketh no ill, ver. 10. He that is governed by a principle of love, neither practises nor contrives ill to his neighbour, to any one that he has any thing to do with: the projecting of evil is in effect the performing of it. It forbids the working of any ill: more is implied than is expressed; love not only worketh no ill, but it worketh all the good that may be; deviseth liberal things. For it is a sin, not only to devise evil against thy neighbour, but to withhold good from those to whom it is due, Prov. 3. 27—29. This proves that love is the fulfilling of the law, answers all the ends of it; for what else is that but to restrain us from evil-doing, and to constrain us to well-doing? Love is a living, active principle of obedience to the whole law. The whole law is written in the heart, if the law of love be there. While we rejoice at deliverance from the condemnation of the

holy law of God, may its precepts be written in our hearts, and transcribed into our lives, that prudence, honesty, and punctuality may mark all our transactions, regulate all our expenses and the payment of our debts, and make way for kindness to the poor. Let us learn not only to avoid injuries to the persons, connexions, property, and characters of men; but to do no kind or degree of evil to any man, and study to be useful and beneficial in every relation and station of life.

9. "For the commandment, Thou shalt not, &c. and whatever other commandment there is, it is all summed up in this saying."—*Schoolfield.*

Ver. 11—14. Four things are here taught, as a christian's directory for his day's work. The situation of believers in this life, as expecting complete and eternal salvation, evidently is intended.

1. When to awake; Now it is high time to awake, ver. 11, to awake out of the sleep of sin; for a sinful condition is a sleeping condition: out of the sleep of carnal security, sloth, and negligence; out of the sleep of spiritual death, and out of the sleep of spiritual deadness; both the wise and foolish virgins slumbered and slept, Matt. 25. 5. We have need to be often excited and stirred up to awake. The word of command to all Christ's disciples is, Watch. Awake; be concerned about your souls and your eternal interest; take heed of sin, be ready to, and serious in that which is good, and live in a constant expectation of the coming of our Lord. Considering, (1.) The time. Consider what time of day it is with us, and you will see it is high time to awake. It is gospel-time, it is the accepted time, it is working time; it is a time when more is expected than was in the times of ignorance, when people sat in darkness. It is high time to awake; for the sun has been up a great while, and shines in our faces. It is high time to awake; for others are awake, and up about us. Know the time to be a busy time; we have a great deal of work to do, and our Master calls us to it. Know the time to be a perilous time; we are in the midst of enemies and snares. It is time to awake, for we have slept enough, 1 Pet. 4. 3, high time indeed, for, Behold, the Bridegroom cometh. (2.) The salvation nigh at hand. Now is our salvation nearer than when

we believed; than when we first believed, and so took upon us the profession of christianity. The eternal happiness we chose for our portion, is now nearer than when we first became christians. Let us mind our way, and mend our pace, we are now nearer our journey's end. Is there but a step betwixt us and heaven, and shall we be slow and dull in our christian course, and move so heavily? The redemption by which salvation comes to sinners was finished when our Lord expired upon the cross. Salvation becomes ours, and is begun when we come to him by faith: it will be finished as to the soul at the hour of death, and as to the body at the day of judgment; when sin and all its consequences will be done away, and death swallowed up in victory.

2. How to make ourselves ready. That is the next care, when we are awake and up; The night is far spent, the day is at hand; therefore it is time to dress ourselves. Clearer discoveries will be quickly made of gospel-grace than have been yet made. The life of faith may be called day, in comparison with the darkness of the idolatrous and unconverted state, yet it was but night or twilight, in comparison with the light of heaven. Observe, (1.) What we must put off; put off our night-clothes, cast off the works of darkness. Sinful works are works of darkness; they come from the darkness of ignorance and mistake, they covet the darkness of privacy and concealment, and they end in the darkness of hell and destruction. Let us, therefore, who are of the day, cast them off; not only cease from the practice of them, but detest and abhor them, and have no more to do with them. Because eternity is just at the door, let us take heed lest we are found doing that which will then make against us, 2 Pet. 3. 11, 14. (2.) What we must put on: how we shall dress our souls. Put on the armour of light. Christians are soldiers in the midst of enemies, and their life a warfare, therefore their array must be armour, the armour of God, to which we are directed, Eph. 6. 13, &c. A christian may reckon himself undressed, if he be unarmed. The graces of the Spirit are his armour, to secure the soul from Satan's temptations, and the assaults of this present evil world. This is called the armour of light, some think, alluding to the bright armour which the Roman soldiers used to wear. The graces of the

Spirit are suitable, splendid ornaments, and, in the sight of God, of great price. Put on the Lord Jesus Christ, ver. 14. This stands in opposition to the base lusts, mentioned ver. 13, which must be cast off. Put on Christ, that includes all. Put on the righteousness of Christ for justification; be found in him, Phil. 3. 9, as a man is found in his clothes. Put on the priestly garments of the elder brother, that in them you may obtain the blessing. Put on the Spirit and grace of Christ for sanctification. Put on the new man, Eph. 4. 24, get the habit of grace confirmed, the acts of it quickened. That as saints stand justified before God in the robe of righteousness imputed to them; so they may appear before men adorned with his image for sanctification. Without Christ, we are naked, deformed; all other things are filthy rags, fig-leaves, a sorry shelter. God has provided us coats of skins; large, strong, warm, and durable. The Lord Jesus Christ must be put on as Lord to rule you, as Jesus to save you; and in both, as Christ anointed and appointed by the Father, to this ruling, saving work.

3. How to walk. When we are up and ready, we are not to sit still in affected closeness and privacy, but appear abroad. Let us walk. Christianity teaches us how to walk so as to please God, who ever sees us, 1 Thess. 4. 1. Walk honestly as in the day. Compare Eph. 5. 8. Our conversation must be as if we were the gospel. Walk honestly, and becomingly, to credit your profession, and adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour, and recommend religion in its beauty to others. Christians should be in a special manner careful to conduct themselves well in those things wherein men have an eye upon them, and to study that which is lovely and of good report. Particularly, (1.) We must not walk in rioting and drunkenness; we must abstain from all excess in eating and drinking. We must not give countenance to revelling, nor indulge sensual appetite in private excesses. Christians must not overcharge their hearts with surfeiting and drunkenness, Luke 21. 34. (2.) Not in chambering and wantonness; not in any of those lusts of the flesh, those works of darkness, which are forbidden in the seventh commandment, whatsoever transgresses the pure and sacred law of chastity and modesty. (3.) Not in strife and

envying. These are also works of darkness; for though acts and instances of strife and envy are very common, yet none are willing to own the principles, or to acknowledge themselves envious and contentious. It may be the lot of the best saints to be envied and striven with; but to strive and to envy, ill becomes the disciples and followers of the peaceable and humble Jesus. Where there are riot and drunkenness, there usually are chambering and wantonness, and strife and envy. Solomon puts them all together, Prov. 23. 29, &c.

4. What provision to make. Make not provision for the flesh. Be not careful about the body. Our great care must be to provide for our souls: but must we take no care about our bodies? Yes, but two things are forbidden; (1.) Perplexing ourselves with inordinate cares. Be not solicitous in forecasting for the body; be not careful and cumbered about it, Matt. 6. 31. It forbids anxious incurring care. (2.) Indulging ourselves in irregular desires. We are not forbidden to provide for the body, it is a lamp that must be supplied with oil, but we are forbidden, to fulfil the lusts thereof. The necessities of the body are to be considered, but the lusts of it must not be gratified. Natural wants are to be answered, but evil appetites must be checked and denied. To ask meat for our necessities, is our duty, we are taught to pray for daily bread; but to ask meat for our lusts, is provoking God, Ps. 78. 18. Those who profess to walk in the Spirit, must not fulfil the lusts of the flesh, Gal. 5. 16. The longer we have heard and professed the gospel, the more should we deem ourselves bound to shake off all sloth; and the nearer our salvation approaches, the more diligent should we be to finish the work of life, and to go forth to meet our Lord, rejoicing in the prospect of soon having done with sin and conflict.

Emerging from the night of unconversion, and the twilight of our first views of heavenly things, and looking forward to the day of perfect knowledge and purity, let us reject and flee from the works of darkness, and put on the whole armour of light. Let us strive to walk consistently with our profession, and to honour it; to avoid every kind of excess, and sinful indulgence, and all spiritual as well as carnal wickedness. Instead

of making provision for the flesh to indulge its lusts, let us study to put on the Lord Jesus Christ, to imbibe his spirit, to copy his conduct, and to walk in every respect as he walked.

11. "And do this as knowing the time."—*Scholefield.*

CHAPTER XIV.

The apostle cautions the Jewish converts against judging, and gentile believers against despising one the other, on account of their contrary opinions and practices, relating to such indifferent things, as ceremonial meals and days, ver. 1—13; and he exhorts the gentiles to take heed of giving offence in their use of such things, 14—23.

Ver. 1—6. Differences of opinion prevailed even among the immediate followers of Christ and their disciples. Nor did St. Paul by any express decision attempt to put an end to them. A compelled assent to any doctrine, or conformity to any outward observances without conviction, would be only hypocritical and quite unavailing. So essential are the rights and existence of private judgment to the existence of true religion, and so useless would be attempts for producing absolute unanimity among true Christians. The apostle, with all his authority, could endure his fellow-Christians to differ from him on matters of minor importance, and thus gave a general rule for all similar cases.

He exhorted that a weak believer should be received as a brother, and not perplexed with disputations. If a man does not profess repentance and a believing dependence, as a justly condemned sinner, on the righteousness and atonement of Christ, as God manifest in the flesh, relying on the Holy Spirit for teaching and sanctification, he cannot be considered as a believer; but with regard to one who is such, receive him, help him, encourage him. Receive him, not to quarrel with him, and to argue about uncertain points which will but perplex and shake his faith. Let not Christian fellowship be disturbed with strifes of words. Not to judge his doubtful thoughts; (so the margin;) not to seek out his weak sentiments concerning things which he is in doubt about, that you may censure and condemn him. Receive him not to expose him, but to instruct and strengthen him. God never cast off

any one that had true grace, though he were but weak in it; he never broke the bruised reed. It will be good for us to put this question to ourselves, when tempted to disdain and censure our brethren; Has not God owned them; and if he has, dare I disown them?

When it shall please God to awaken in the governors of all christian churches such a spirit of moderation and goodness, joined with true zeal for religion, as to leave such things in that natural state of indifference in which all sensible men confess it is best they should be left, many separations will cease, and the healers of such breaches will do noble service, be honoured by all that love christianity, and amply rewarded by the great Head of the church.—(80.)

But until the Spirit be poured upon us from on high, it cannot be expected these events will generally take place.

The apostle, ver. 2—4, exemplifies the general rule by a particular instance. One christian, a gentile convert, or a jew who had been set free from the prejudices of his nation, believed it lawful to eat any kind of food: another, a jewish convert, or one who had imbibed jewish prejudices, would eat only herbs, or vegetable food, lest he should unawares eat some unclean flesh; or refrains from meat sold in the markets, lest he should eat what had been offered to idols. This showed he was weak in religious knowledge, but that he was conscientious. Let not the christian who used his liberty, despise his weak brother as ignorant and superstitious. Let not the scrupulous believers speak censoriously of his brother, for God had accepted him, without regarding these distinctions.

Observe, God not only receives him, but holds him up, ver. 4. You think that he who eateth, will fall by his presumption, or that he who eateth not, will sink under the weight of his own fears and scruples: but if they have true faith, and regard God, the one in the intelligent use of his christian liberty, and the other in the conscientious forbearance of it, they shall be held up; the one in his integrity, and the other in his comfort. This hope is built upon the power of God, for being able, no doubt he is willing, to exert that power for the preservation of those that are his own. In reference to spiritual difficulties and dangers, much of our hope and comfort is grounded

upon the Divine power, 1 Pet. 1. 5. We do in effect usurp the place of God, when we take upon us thus to judge others; especially to judge their thoughts and intentions, which are out of our view; to judge their persons and state, concerning which God sees not as men see; and he is their Master, and not we.

We have work enough to do at home, and if we must needs judge, let us look to our own hearts and ways. doom will be according to his Master's sentence, not according to ours. How well for us is it, that we are not to stand or fall by the judgment one of another, but by the righteous and unerring judgment of God, which is according to truth! The case as to the observance of days was similar. Those who thought themselves still under obligation by the ceremonial law, kept up respect to the times of the passover, pentecost, new moons, and feasts of tabernacles. Those who knew that all these things were abolished and done away by Christ's coming, esteemed every day alike, of course excepting the Lord's day, which all christians un-animously observed; but they took no notice of the peculiar festivals of the jews.

He that regards the day, that makes conscience of observing the jewish fasts and festivals, not imposing it upon others, God will accept his honest intention, though he be under a mistake. He that does not make a difference between one day and another, but esteems every day alike, does not do it out of opposition, contradiction, or contempt of his brother, if he be a good christian; and we charitably conclude, that to the Lord he does not regard it. He makes no such difference of days, because he knows God has made none; and intends his honour in endeavouring to dedicate every day to him. So he that eateth what is set before him, if it be food convenient, understands the liberty God has granted him, and uses it to the glory of God, thankfully owning his wisdom and goodness; and he giveth God thanks, that in those things his conscience is not fettered. On the other hand, he that eateth not those meats which were forbidden by the ceremonial law, gives God thanks that there is enough beside. Thus, while both have regard to God in what they do, why should either be judged or despised? But it is not enough

that our conscience consents to what we do: it is necessary that it be certified from the word of God. Take heed of acting contrary to a doubting conscience.

Observe, it is thankful regard to God, the Author and Giver of all our mercies, that sanctifies and sweetens them. He giveth God thanks; probably, it appears by this, that saying grace at their meals, as we commonly call it, was the known practice of the church, among christians of all sorts. An ancient, commendable, apostolical, christian practice, derived down from Christ's example through all the ages of the church, Matt. 14. 19; 15. 36; Luke 9. 16; John 6. 11; Matt. 26. 26, 27; Acts 27. 35. We should bless the creatures in the name of God before we use them, and bless the name of God for them after, for both expressions are used. We are all prone to make our own views the standard of truth, to deem things certain which to others appear doubtful, so that it is scarcely possible to prevail with many to receive and hold communion with each other, who have been received by the Lord, and enjoy communion with him. Thus christians often have despised or condemned each other, about doubtful or unimportant matters, as if the main points of faith and piety had been concerned. If we could demonstrate every tittle of our doctrine, and every part of our worship to be scriptural, yet we ought not to despise or condemn a man, because he is not able to see just with us, about things which are not essential to salvation. Let us beware that we do not attempt to reject or cast down those whom God has received, and will uphold; nor judge and condemn any of his conscientious servants.

Ver. 7—13. The apostle shows how essential it is to have regard to God, and not to ourselves. Observe the description of true christians. Our end and aim, ver. 7, 8, is not self, but the Lord. If we would know what way we walk in, we must inquire toward what end we walk. Not to self; no believer liveth to himself. Though some are weak and others are strong, yet all must agree in this, not to live to themselves. Not one that has given up his name to Christ, is allowedly a self-seeker; that is contrary to the foundation of true christianity. We neither live to our-

selves, nor die to ourselves, we are not our own masters, we are not at our own disposal. The business of our lives is not to please ourselves, but to please God. The business of our deaths, which we are every day exposed to, is not that we should seek vain glory. When we come to die actually, it is not merely that we would be eased of the burden of the flesh; but it is to the Lord, that we may depart, and be with Christ, may be present with the Lord. If life is prolonged, aim to spend it to the glory of Christ; or if death be expected, refer it to Him, to be ordered in all respects for the glory of his name.

But to the Lord, ver. 8, to the Lord Christ, to whom all power and judgment are committed, and in whose name we are taught, as christians, to do every thing, Col. 3. 17, with reference to the will of Christ as our rule, to the glory of Christ as our end, Phil. 1. 21. Christ we aim at, living and dying. We live, to glorify him in all the actions and affairs of life; we die, whether a natural or a violent death, to glorify him, and to go to be glorified with him. Christ is the centre, in which all the lines of life and death do meet. That is true christianity, which makes Christ all in all. Though some christians are weak, and others strong; though of different strength, capacities, apprehensions, and practices, in lesser things, yet they are all the Lord's; all are looking and serving, and approving themselves to Christ, and are accordingly owned and accepted of him. Is it for us then to judge or despise our brethren, as if we were their masters, and they were to stand or fall by our dooms?

This is grounded upon Christ's absolute sovereignty and dominion, ver. 9, which were the fruit and end of his death and resurrection. To this end he both died, and rose, and revived. He, being risen, entered upon a heavenly life, the glory which he had before, that he might be Lord of all, Acts 10. 36, for he is Head over all things to the church. He is Lord of those that are living, to rule them; of those that are dead, to revive them, and raise them up. Now if Christ paid such a price for his dominion over souls and consciences, and has such a just and undisputed right to exercise that dominion; when we are ready to reproach, and reflect upon the

name and memory even of those that are dead and gone, and to censure them, we must consider that Christ is Lord of the dead, as well as of the living. If they are dead, they have already given up their account, and let that suffice.

This suggests another reason why christians should not judge or despise one another. Because both the one and the other must shortly give an account, ver. 10. Believing regard to the judgment of the great day, would silence rash judgments; Why dost thou that art weak, judge thy brother who is strong? And why dost thou that art strong, set at nought thy brother who is weak? Why is all this clashing, and contradicting, and censuring, among christians? We shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ, 2 Cor. 5. 10, expecting our final doom from him. The apostle quotes Isa. 45. 23. It is here very fitly applied to the judgment of the great day, which will be the highest and most illustrious exercise of Christ's dominion. Here is a proof of Christ's Godhead; he is the Lord, and he is God equal with the Father. Divine honour is due to him, and must be paid, by every knee, and every tongue, either freely, or by force.

1. All his people do it freely; are made willing in the day of his power, in cheerful and avowed subjection to Jesus Christ, the understanding bowed to his truths, the will to his laws, the whole man to his authority; this is expressed by the bowing of the knee, the posture of adoration and prayer, which as guided by inward fear and reverence, is accepted. Confessing to him; acknowledging his glory, grace, and greatness; acknowledging our own meanness and vileness, confessing our sins to him.

2. All his foes shall be constrained to do it. When he shall come in the clouds, and every eye shall see him, then, and not till then, will all those promises, which speak of his victories over his enemies and their subjection to him, have their full accomplishment.

Hence the apostle concludes, ver. 12. Every one of us shall give account of himself to God. Not for others, nor they for us; but every one for himself. How we have spent our time, how we have improved our opportunities, what we have done, and how we have done it. Therefore we have little to do, to judge others, And we have the more to do, to

judge ourselves. Let every man prove his own work, Gal. 6. 4, search his own heart and life; let that take up his thoughts; and he that is strict in judging and abasing himself, will not be apt to judge and despise his brother. Therefore let us not judge one another any more. Let it suffice, that you have hitherto continued in this uncharitable practice.

We must take heed of saying or doing things which may at all cause our brother to stumble or fall, ver. 13; the one signifies a lesser, the other a greater degree of offence, that which may be an occasion, 1. Of grief to our brother. One that is weak, will be greatly troubled to see thee eat what he thinks the law forbids. Christians should take heed of grieving one another. See Matt. 18. 6, 10. 2. Of guilt to our brother. The former is a stumbling-block, a hindrance and discouragement; but this is an occasion to fall. If thy weak brother, by thine example and influence, without any satisfaction concerning his christian liberty, be drawn to act against his conscience, though the thing were lawful to thee, yet not being so to him, thou art to be blamed for giving him the occasion. Thus while we shun superstitious scruples and assert our christian liberty, we must beware of spiritual pride and self-preference. And, while we pity such as are harassed with groundless scruples, and held in bondage by observances not commanded, let us be careful not to abuse our liberty by the improper use of lawful things, or by vesturing upon such as are doubtful.

Can christian charity ever allow, that by condemning thy brother, thou shouldst expose him to the temptation of condemning thee in his turn, of growing cold towards thee, of being discouraged and turning aside from the path of faith and piety? We do not make the salvation of our brethren enough our concern, but God careth for them.—(94.)

11. The application of this passage to the Lord Jesus Christ, affords an irrefragable testimony to his Deity—*Cor.*

13. By 'stumbling-block' is meant a slighter cause of offence, but such as wounds and disturbs the conscience of another. Occasion to fall, is a more weighty offence, such as may cause one to apostatize from the christian faith.

Ver. 14—18. It was not only from the revelation made to Peter, Acts 10. 14, but from the tenour of the whole gospel, and the manifest design of

Christ's death, that Paul learned to count nothing common or unclean. This clearly instructed Paul's own mind, and he practised accordingly. But consider the royal law of christian love and charity, ver. 15. If their brother be troubled to see them eat things which the law of Moses forbade, which yet they might lawfully do, true love would make them tender of their peace and purity, and lead us to regard the consciences of such as well as their own. Christ deals gently with those that have true grace, though they are weak in it. Consider the design of Christ's death; drawing a soul to sin, threatens the destruction of that soul, ver. 15. By shaking his faith, provoking his passion, and tempting him to act against the light of his own conscience, thou dost, as much as in thee lies, destroy him. The beginning of sin is as the letting out of water; we are not sure that it will stop any where on this side eternal destruction. It does not imply that the weak brother thereby would actually perish, but the consideration of the love of Christ in dying for souls, should make us very tender of the happiness and salvation of souls, and careful not to do any thing which may obstruct and injure them. Did Christ quit a life for souls, and shall not we quit a morsel of meat for them? Shall we despise those whom Christ valued at so high a rate? Did he deny himself for them so as to die for them, and shall not we deny ourselves for them so as to abstain from any indulgence?

Let not then your good be evil spoken of, ver. 16; take heed of doing any thing which may give occasion to others to speak evil, either of the christian religion in general, or of your christian liberty in particular. The gospel is your good; the privileges granted by it, are your good; your knowledge and strength of grace to discern and use your liberty in things disputed, are your good; a good which the weak brother hath not. Now let not this be evil spoken of. It is true, we cannot hinder ungoverned tongues from speaking evil; but we must not, if we can help it, give them any occasion. Do not use your knowledge and strength so as to occasion people to call it presumption and disobedience to God's law. We must deny ourselves in many cases what we may lawfully do, when our doing it may prejudice our good

name. Our good often comes to be evil spoken of, because we use lawful things in an uncharitable and selfish manner.

We may apply it more generally. Good praying, preaching, and discourse, may, for want of prudence in ordering the time, the expression, and other circumstances to edification, be evil spoken of. It is indeed their sin, who speak evil of that which is good, for the sake of circumstantial errors; but it is our folly, if we give any occasion to do so. As we value the reputation of the good we profess and practise, let us seek that it may not be evil spoken of.

True christianity is here called the kingdom of God, ver. 17, 18, it is intended to rule us, as a kingdom; it is willing subjection to God's power. It's not meat and drink: it does not consist in using, or in abstaining from meats and drinks. The jewish religion consisted much in abstaining from some meats religiously, eating other meats religiously, Lev. 11, 2; as several of the sacrifices were to be eaten before the Lord: but all those appointments are now abolished, Col. 2. 21, 22. At the great day it will be asked, "Who feared God, and worked righteousness," not, Who was of this party and persuasion, of this or the other opinion in lesser things. Nothing is more destructive to true christianity than placing it in modes, forms, and circumstantials.

It is righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. These are essentials of christianity; in the pursuit of which we must be zealous. Righteousness, peace, and joy, are very comprehensive words; each of them includes much, both of the foundation and the superstructure of religion. As to God, our great concern is righteousness; to appear before him justified by the merit of Christ's death, sanctified by the Spirit of his grace; for the righteous Lord loveth righteousness. As to our brethren, it is peace; to live in peace, and love, and charity with them; following peace with all men; Christ came into the world, to be the great Peacemaker. As to ourselves, it is joy in the Holy Ghost; that spiritual joy wrought by the blessed Spirit in the hearts of believers, which respects God as their reconciled Father, and heaven as their expected home. Next to compliance with God, the life of religion consists in

delighting ourselves always in the Lord. We may expect peace and joy in the Holy Ghost, only when the foundation is laid in righteousness, Isa. 32. 17.

That which puts an acceptableness upon all good duties, is regard to Christ in the doing of them, ver. 18. He that observes these things is acceptable to God. God is well pleased with such a one. Those are most pleasing to God, that are best pleased with him; and they abound most in peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. They are approved of men, of all wise and good men, and the opinion of others is not to be regarded. The persons and things which are acceptable to God, should be approved of us. The approbation of men is not to be slighted; but the acceptance of God is to be desired and sought in the first place. Let us follow those things which really tend to peace and mutual edification, let us pray for more humility and self-denial, that we may more seek acceptance with God, and less desire the applause of men.

14 I know and am persuaded. *Parr* observes, Not *first* to be persuaded, and *then* to seek to know; knowledge must go before persuasion, as a candle to direct it.

Ver. 19--23. Here is the sum of our duty towards our brethren.

1. We must study mutual peace. Many wish for peace, and talk loudly for it, who do not follow the things that make for peace, but the contrary. Liberty in things indifferent, condescension to the weak and tender, zeal in the great things of God, make for peace. Meekness, humility, self-denial, love, make for peace.

2. We must study mutual edification. We cannot edify one another, while we are quarrelling and contending. We may edify one another by good counsel, reproof, instruction, example. We are God's building, God's temple, and need to be edified; therefore we must study to promote the spiritual growth of each other. None so strong but they may be edified; none so weak, but they may edify; while we edify others, we benefit ourselves.

And consider the work of God, ver. 20. For meat destroy not the work of God, the work of grace, the work of faith in thy brother's soul. The works of peace and comfort are destroyed by such an offence given; take heed of it therefore. The work of grace and peace is the work of God; it is wrought by

him, there is a work to be wrought in us, in order to our own salvation. Every saint is God's workmanship, his husbandry, his building, Eph. 2. 10; 1 Cor. 3. 9. We must deny ourselves in our appetites, inclinations, and in the use of christian liberty, rather than hinder and prejudice our own or others' grace and peace. Many do, for meat and drink, destroy the work of God in themselves; nothing is more destructive to the soul than pampering and pleasing the flesh, and fulfilling the lusts of it; so likewise in others, by wilful offence given. Lawful things may be done unlawfully, by giving offence to brethren. Observe, the apostle directs his reproof most against those who gave the offence; but not as if those were not to be blamed who causelessly and weakly took offence, from the ignorance of christian liberty, and the want of that charity which is not easily provoked, and thinketh no evil.

To eat flesh, or to drink wine, are things both lawful and comfortable, but not necessary to the support of human life; therefore we must deny ourselves in them, rather than give offence, ver. 21. This extends to all indifferent things, whereby thy brother is offended, is involved either in sin or in trouble: or is made weak, his graces weakened, his comforts weakened, his resolutions weakened.

Hast thou faith? Have it to thyself before God, ver. 22. It is not meant of justifying faith, but of knowledge and persuasion of our christian liberty. Hast thou clearness in such particulars? Enjoy the comfort of it, but do not trouble others by an imprudent use of it. Clearness in doubtful matters contributes much to our comfortable walking. The end of such knowledge is, that, being satisfied in our liberty, we may have a conscience void of offence toward God. That is true comfort which we have before God. Happy is he that condemns not himself in that thing which he allows, ver. 22. Many a one allows himself in practice to do, what in his judgment and conscience he condemns himself for; allows it for the sake of the pleasure, profit, or credit of it; allows it in conformity to custom; yet his own conscience condemns him for it. Happy is the man who does not make his own heart his adversary, as he must do who does that which he is not clear he may

lawfully do. He is happy that has peace and quietness within ; for the testimony of conscience will be a special cordial in troublesome times. Though men condemn us, it is well enough if our own hearts condemn us not, 1 John 3. 21.

Nor must we act against the dictates of a doubting conscience. For he that doubteth, is condemned if he eat, ver. 23, it turns into sin to him ; he is condemned by his own conscience, because he does what he is not fully persuaded he may lawfully do. Whatever we do in religion, it will not turn to good account, except we do it from a principle of faith, with believing regard to the will of Christ as our rule, to the glory of Christ as our end, and the righteousness of Christ as our plea. It is dangerous to put force upon conscience, though it be under a mistake. Few are so happy as to be quite free from condemnation in what they allow. A sound judgment, a simple heart, a tender conscience, habitual self-denial, are necessary for enjoying this comfort. Most of us may see frequent cause to condemn ourselves in this respect, and by daily repentance, faith, and prayer, deprecate the deserved condemnation of our God.

How excellent are the blessings of Christ's kingdom, which consists, not in outward ritual things, like meats and drinks, but in righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. How preferable is the service of God to all other services, and in the performance of it we are called to live and die, not to ourselves but to Christ, whose we are, and whom we ought to serve.

23 "Is condemned if he eat, because it is not of faith."—*Scholerfield.*

CHAPTER XV.

The apostle gives directions to stronger believers how to behave toward the weak, ver. 1—6. And to all of them to receive one another as brethren, 7—12. And draws to a conclusion of the main body of his epistle, 13—33.

Ver. 1—7. We must bear the infirmities of the weak, ver. 1. Thus Christ bore with his weak disciples, and excused them. We must also bear their infirmities, by ministering to them, as there is occasion. That is bearing one another's burdens. We must not seek to please

ourselves, but our neighbour. We must not make it our business to gratify the appetites and desires of our own heart. The first lesson we have to learn, is, to deny ourselves, Matt. 16. 24. Christians must please their brethren. Not please ourselves in the use of christian liberty, which was allowed, not for our own pleasure, but for the glory of God, and the profit and edification of others. How amiable and comfortable a society would the church of Christ be, if christians would study to please one another, as now we see them cross, and thwart, and contradict one another!

We must please our neighbour, for his good, especially the good of his soul : not by serving his wicked wills, humouring him in a sinful way, or suffering sin upon him ; if we thus please men, we are not the servants of Christ. Observe, that Christ pleased not himself. He did not consult his worldly credit, ease, safety, or pleasure ; he had not where to lay his head, lived upon alms, would not be made a king ; detested no proposal with greater abhorrence than that, Master, spare thyself ; did not seek his own will, John 5. 30, endured the contradiction of sinners against himself, Heb. 12. 3, made himself of no reputation : and all this for our sakes, to bring in righteousness for us, and to set us an example. His whole life was a self-denying, self-displeasing life. He bore the infirmities of the weak, Heb. 4. 15. He is the most advanced christian who is the most conformed to Christ.

Christ pleased not himself, ver. 3. Not as if his undertaking were a grievance to him, for he was willing to it, but in his humiliation, the content and satisfaction of natural inclination were altogether crossed and denied. This is expressed from Ps. 69. 9. Christ endured the greatest indignities ; there was much of reproach in his sufferings. Or, the sin of those reproaches which Christ undertook to satisfy for ; many understand it so. Every sin is a kind of reproach to God, especially presumptuous sins. The guilt of these fell upon Christ, when he was made sin, that is, a sin offering for us. When he bore our sins in his own body on the tree, they fell on him as on our Surety. Considering his spotless purity and holiness ; the infinite love of the Father to him, and his eternal concern for his Father's

glory; nothing could be more contrary to him, than to be made sin and a curse for us, and to have the reproaches of God fall upon him; especially for strangers, enemies, and traitors; the just for the unjust, 1 Pet. 3. 18. He bore the guilt of sin, and the curse for it; we are only called to bear a little of the trouble of it. He bore the presumptuous sins of the wicked; we are called only to bear the infirmities of the weak.

Even Christ; even he who was infinitely happy in the enjoyment of himself, who needed not us or our services; even he who thought it no robbery to be equal with God, who had reason enough to please himself, and no reason to be concerned, much less to be crossed, for us; even he pleased not himself, even he bore our sins. And should not we be humble, self-denying, and ready to consider one another, who are members one of another? Therefore we must go and do likewise; For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, ver. 4. That which is written of Christ, concerning his self-denial and sufferings, is written for our learning. If Christ denied himself, surely we should deny ourselves. The example of Christ, in what he did and said, is recorded for our imitation. That which is written in the Old Testament is written for our learning. What David had said in his own person, Paul applied to Christ, and gives us this excellent rule that all the scriptures of the Old Testament, much more, then, those of the New, were written for our learning, and are not to be looked upon as of private interpretation, but may be applied to our respective cases, for direction and encouragement. What happened to the Old Testament saints, happened to them for an ensample. The scriptures are left for a standing rule to us: they are written, that they might remain for our use and benefit, as much as for that of those to whom they were first delivered, whether containing types and predictions of Christ, or gracious promises, precepts, admonitions or examples.

For our learning.—Those are most learned who are most mighty in the scriptures. We must labour, not only to understand the literal meaning of scripture, but to learn out of it that which will do us good; and need help not only to roll away the stone, but to draw out

the water; for in many places the well is deep. Practical observations are more profitable than critical expositions.

That we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.—Scripture was written, that we might know what to hope for from God, upon what grounds, and in what way. This is, through patience and comfort of the scripture. Patience and comfort suppose trouble and sorrow; such is the lot of the saints in this world. But both these befriend that hope which is the life of our souls. Patience works experience, and experience hope, that maketh not ashamed. Nothing is more destructive to hope than impatience.

It is by the strenuous exercise of the patience which the consolations administered in scripture so powerfully support, that we have an assured and joyful hope in the midst of tribulation.—(33)

The comfort of the scriptures—that comfort which springs from the word of God, that is the sweetest and sweetest comfort, and is likewise a great stay to hope, as it is an earnest of the good hoped for. The Spirit, as a Comforter, is the earnest of our inheritance.

When the apostle entreats the pouring out a spirit of love and unity, he addresses God, as the God of patience and consolation, ver. 5. As a God who bears with us, and comforts us, who is ready to comfort those that are cast down; teaching us so to testify our love to our brethren, and to preserve unity, by being patient and kind one with another. As a God who gives us patience and comfort. It comes through the scripture, but from God as the Fountain. Observe the mercy entreated of God; Grant you to be like-minded one towards another, according to Jesus Christ. The foundation of christian love and peace is a consent in judgment, an agreement in affection. This like-mindedness must be according to the precept of Christ, according to the pattern and example of Christ. Like-mindedness among christians, according to Christ Jesus, is the gift of God; and a precious gift it is, for which we must earnestly seek unto him.

It will not suffice, that there be one mouth, there must be one mind; ver. 6, for God looks at the heart; nay, there will hardly be one mouth, where there is not one mind. As the Father of our

Lord Jesus Christ, God must be glorified as he has now revealed himself in Jesus Christ; who is approached by sinners through his beloved Son, and is become their reconciled Father in him.

We learn from this passage, ver. 6, that the scene pleasing in the sight of God, is, not to behold christians disputing about their little peculiarities, nor the strong showing their superiority over the weak, but to see them laying aside their differences, and the strong condescending to the weak, uniting together in christian worship.—(25.)

In receiving others, ver. 7, admitting them to your society and communion, show the same tender mercy Christ showed to you, lost, ignorant, guilty sinners, in receiving you for the heirs of glory. Freely and graciously ye have received; freely and graciously give. Our divine Master invites his disciples, and encourages them by exhibiting himself as meek and lowly in spirit. The same disposition ought to mark the conduct of his servants, and especially of the strong towards the weak.—(25.)

Has Christ been kind to us, and shall we be unkind to those that are his? Has Christ received us into the nearest and dearest relation to himself; received us into his fold, into his family, into the adoption of sons, into covenant with himself; has he received us, though we were strangers and enemies, into fellowship and communion with himself? The end of our reception by Christ, is, that we might glorify God in this world, and be glorified with him in that to come. See to what he received us, to a happiness transcending all comprehension; see for what he received us, for his Father's glory; he had that in view in all the displays of his favour to us. The great end in all our actions must be, that God may be glorified; nothing more conduces to that than the mutual love and kindness of those who profess religion. Those that agree in Christ, who is the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, and the great centre of unity, may well agree among themselves.

4. It is in promises as in commands; they do not exclusively concern those to whom they were first made; but being inserted in the scriptures, they are made of public benefit.—*T. H. Horne.*

Ver. 8—13. Christ received human nature among the jews, and exercised

his personal labours among them. Thus he fulfilled the prophecies and promises relating to that nation, and the gentile converts could have no excuse for despising them. On the other hand, the gospel had been preached fully among the gentiles by the command of Christ, that they might glorify God for his mercy, as had been expressly foretold by the ancient prophets. Thus jewish converts could not shun the gentiles, if they regarded the will of their Lord, or the prophecies of scripture.

I will confess to thee among the gentiles, ver. 9, thy name shall be known, and owned in the gentile world; there shall gospel grace and love be celebrated. This is quoted from Ps. 18. 49. Christ, in and by his apostles and ministers, sent to disciple all nations. The exaltation of Christ, as well as the conversion of sinners, is set forth by the praising of God.

The gentiles should rejoice with his people, ver. 10. Deut. 32. 43. No greater joy can come to any people, than the coming of the gospel among them in power. The gentiles being brought into the church, are companions in patience and tribulation; to recompense which, they share in the joy. They should praise God, ver. 11. Praise the Lord, all ye gentiles, Ps. 117. 1. Converting grace sets people to praise God, and gives a heart to it. The gentiles had been, for many ages, praising idols of wood and stone, but now they are brought to praise the Lord; and this David in spirit speaks of. Calling upon all the nations to praise the Lord, intimates, that they shall have the knowledge of him.

They should believe in Christ, ver. 12. See Isa. 11. 10. Christ, as God, was David's root, Christ, as man, was David's offspring. And he that shall rise to reign over the gentiles; in him shall the gentiles trust. Faith is the soul's confidence in Christ, and dependence on him. The prophet has it, To him shall the gentiles seek. The method of faith is, first to seek unto Christ, as to one proposed to us for a Saviour; and, finding him able and willing to save, then to trust in him. Those who know him will trust in him. This seeking to him is the effect of trust in him; seeking him by prayer. We shall never seek to Christ till we trust in him, Jews and gentiles being thus

united in Christ's love, why should they not be united in one another's love? The whole plan of redemption is suited to reconcile us to one another, as well as to our gracious God.

Hence the apostle prays, ver. 13, that God, the author and object of hope, would fill them with all spiritual joy and peace, by enabling them simply to believe on him, revealed in his beloved Son, and by relying on his gracious promises; that so they might attain an abiding hope of eternal life, through the sanctifying and comforting energy of the Holy Spirit. Our own power will never reach this; and therefore where his hope is, and is abounding, the blessed Spirit must have all the glory. "All joy and peace;" all sorts of true joy and peace. When we come to God by prayer, we must enlarge our desires. Ask for all joy; open thy mouth wide, and he will fill it.

Not only a good hope, through grace, of future blessedness, but even a full assurance of it, and the most settled establishment and humble confidence in believing, so as to suppress doubts and fears, through the powerful operation of the Holy Spirit, by his enlightening their minds, strengthening their hearts, witnessing with their spirits that they are children of God, and giving earnest the eternal inheritance.—(82)

13 The power of the Holy Ghost here, and the power of the Spirit of God, ver. 19, make a distinction between the Holy Spirit himself, and the power which he exerts, and show that he is a Divine Person. And as in these passages, things peculiar to God are said to be performed by the power of his Spirit, or of the Holy Ghost, it is manifest that the power which the Holy Spirit exerts, is no less than the power of God.—*Guyse*.

Ver. 14—21. The apostle was persuaded that the Roman christians were filled with a kind and affectionate spirit, as well as with knowledge, and so were able to admonish one another. He had written to remind them of their duties and their dangers, because God had peculiarly appointed him to be the minister of Christ to the gentiles. He wrote putting them in mind. People excuse themselves from hearing the word, by saying that the minister can tell them nothing but what they knew before. If it be so, yet have they not need to know it better, and to be put in mind of it?

That he might be the servant of Christ, sent to make known the unsearch-

able riches of his grace, ver. 16. He officiated with labour and zeal in that gospel which is of Divine origin, that the heathens, being converted, might be devoted as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God; and that their spiritual offerings of prayer, thanksgiving, praise, and charity, might be presented as a sweet odour, with acceptance through Christ Jesus, far beyond all the oblations made at the temple, they and their services being purified and consecrated to God, not by ceremonial libations, but by the putting forth the gifts, graces, and sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit.—(82.)

It was an acceptable offering; being sanctified by the Holy Ghost. Paul preached to them, but what made them sacrifices to God, was, their sanctification: not his work, but the work of the Holy Ghost. None are acceptably offered to God but those that are sanctified: unholy things can never be pleasing to the holy God.

Mercy is communicated by Christ both to jews and gentiles, who therefore are justly required to unite in their praises to the Root of Jesse. We gentiles have been presented to God as a holy offering, may we be sanctified more and more by his Spirit, and established in a firm confidence in Christ.—(80)

The conversion of souls pertains unto God, and therefore it is the matter of Paul's glorying; not the things of the flesh. Paul would have them rejoice with him in the extent and efficacy of his ministry; of which he speaks not only with the greatest deference possible to the power of Christ, and the effectual working of the Spirit as all in all; but as protesting the truth of what he said, ver. 17, 18.

The apostle asserts in positive and unequivocal terms, his performance of miracles. These words, signs, wonders, and mighty deeds, are the specific appropriate terms employed through the New Testament when public miracles, such as were confirmed by the evidence of the senses, are expressed. The acts of the apostles describe such as having been wrought by St. Paul.—(55.)

The power of the Spirit of God made this effectual, ver. 19. Paul himself, though a great preacher, could not make one soul obedient further than the Spirit of God accompanied his labours.

This is encouragement to faithful ministers, who labour under the sense of great weakness and infirmity, that it is all one to the blessed Spirit to work by many, or by those that have no power. The same Almighty Spirit that wrought with Paul, often perfects strength in weakness, and ordains praise out of the mouth of babes and sucklings. The success which he had in preaching, is what he here rejoices in; for the converted nations were his joy, and crown of rejoicing: and he tells them of it, not only that they might rejoice with him, but that they might be the more ready to receive the truths he had written to them, and to own him whom Christ had thus signally owned.

Observe his unwearied diligence and industry in his work. He preached in many places; many hundred miles distant. He fully preached the gospel of Christ; gave a full account of the truth and terms of the gospel; had not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God, Acts 20. 27, had kept back nothing that was necessary for them to know. He preached in places that had not heard the gospel before, ver. 20, 21. Not that Paul never preached where others had been before him; but he principally sought the good of those that sat in darkness. He was desirous not to build upon another man's foundation, lest he should thereby give occasion to those who sought occasion to reflect upon him. He quotes Isa. 52. 15. That which had not been told them, shall they see. This made the success of Paul's preaching more remarkable. The transition from darkness to light is more sensible than the after growth and increase of that light. The gospel is not only a truth to be believed, but a law to be obeyed. Paul aimed in all his travels, at the conversion and salvation of souls. Whatever good we do, it is not we, but Christ by us, who does it; the work is his, the strength his; he is all in all, he works all our works, Phil. 2. 13; Isa. 26. 12. Paul takes all occasions to own this, that the whole praise might be ascribed to Christ. Those ministers are likely to win souls that preach both by word and deed; by their conduct showing forth the power of the truths they preach.

16 The terms here used are taken from the Jewish economy, and refer to the temple worship.—*Cor.*

19. The apostle here mentions his near approach to Illyricum, but it is not stated that he had entered that country. The minute particulars of his *first* journey to Greece show that he was all the while at a considerable distance from Illyricum, but the general account given, Acts 20. 2, of his *second* visit allow his approach to that country, and as this visit immediately preceded his writing this epistle, it was natural that the apostle should refer to the journey lately taken.—*Paley, Lardner.*

Ver. 22—29. St. Paul declares his purpose to see the Christians at Rome.

1. He had a great desire to see them; not to see Rome, then in its greatest pomp and splendour; nor to converse with the philosophers and learned men at Rome, though such conversation must have been agreeable to so great a scholar as Paul, but to come unto you, ver. 23, a company of poor despised saints in Rome, hated of the world, but loving God, and beloved of him. These were the excellent ones in whom he delighted, Ps. 16. 3. This desire Paul had for many years. The providence of God wisely overrules the purposes and desires of men. God's dearest servants are not always gratified in every thing to which they have a mind. Yet all that delight in God, have the desire of their heart fulfilled, Ps. 37. 4, though all the desires in their heart are not humoured. For which cause, that is, because of his labours in other countries, he was hindered. Observe the gracious providence of God about his ministers, casting their lot according to his own purpose. Paul sought the things of Christ more than his own will, and therefore would not leave his work of planting churches to go to Rome. It concerns us all to do that first which is most needful. We must not take it ill of our friends, if they prefer work which is pleasing to God, before unnecessary visits and compliments, which may please us.

2. He promised to come and see them shortly, ver. 23, 24. The whole of that country, Greece, being more or less leavened with the gospel, he had little more to do there. His project was to see them in his way to Spain. The grace of God often accepts the sincere intention with favour, when the providence of God in wisdom prohibits the execution.

He counted upon their furthering his expedition. It is justly expected from all Christians, that they should promote and further every good work, especially that blessed work the conversion of

souls. He intimates that he intended to make some stay with them. Christian society, rightly managed and improved, is a heaven upon earth, a comfortable earnest of our gathering together unto Christ at the great day. Yet observe, it is but somewhat filled, in part, ver. 24. The satisfaction we have in communion with the saints in this world, is but partial, compared with our communion with Christ; that only, will completely satisfy the soul: it is partial, compared with the communion we hope to have with the saints in the other world.

3. He was going to Jerusalem, as the messenger of charity to the poor saints there, ver. 25, 28. Observe, it was intended for the poor saints which were at Jerusalem, ver. 26. Those whom God favours, the world often frowns upon; therefore riches are not the best things, nor poverty a curse. The christian hebrews are particularly referred to as having had their goodsspoiled, Heb. 10. 34. Though in personal cases of poverty, every church should relieve their own poor, yet sometimes, when more public instances of poverty are presented as objects of our charity, though far off, we should extend our bounty.

It seems that those of Macedonia and Achaia were rich, while those at Jerusalem were poor and needy; infinite wisdom ordering it that some should have what others want, and so this mutual dependence of christians one upon another might be maintained. It pleased them. They were not pressed or constrained to it, but did it of their own accord; and took a pleasure in doing good; God loves a cheerful giver. Every thing that passes between christians should be a proof and instance of the common union which they have in Jesus Christ. Time was when the saints at Jerusalem took special care that the grecian widows should not be neglected in the daily ministration, Acts 6. 1, &c. And now that the providence of God had made them necessitous, they found the grecians kind. We know not what evil may come which may make us glad to be beholden to others. Here there was a special debt owing, ver. 27, the gentiles received the gospel of salvation from the jews; and therefore were bound in gratitude to minister unto them in carnal things. Conscientious regard to God in works of charity and almsgiving, makes

them acceptable service and sacrifice to him. This Paul had undertaken, and resolves to go through with it, ver. 28. When I have sealed to them this fruit, He calls the alms fruit, for it is one of the fruits of righteousness; it sprang from the root of grace in the givers, and redounded to the benefit and comfort of the receivers. And it intimates his great care that it should be disposed of according to the design of the givers. Paul was very solicitous to approve himself faithful in the management of this matter; an excellent pattern for all to follow. Observe, concerning what he expected from them he speaks doubtfully. But concerning what he expected from God, he speaks confidently. It was uncertain whether he should come or not, but he was sure when he did come, he should come in the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ, ver. 29. We cannot expect too little from man, nor too much from God. The blessing of the gospel of Christ is the best and most desirable blessing. When Paul would raise their expectation of something in his coming, he directs them to hope for gospel blessings, spiritual blessings, knowledge, grace, and comfort.

And how delightful and advantageous it is to have the gospel with the fullness of its blessings! How widely and gloriously does it spread, and what wonderful and happy effects does it produce, when attended with the power of the Spirit. This gives the servants of Christ great occasion of glorying in the Lord. They ascribe all honour to him, and would take none to themselves, nor would they boast of any thing he has not wrought by them; nor would they invade the province of their brethren. They are desirous to go, and to work wheresoever God calls them, and they submit to his will all their own purposes and motions for his service, cheerfully encouraging all sorts of benevolence, being actuated by the love of Christ and his Spirit.—(82.)

24. There has been much discussion whether St Paul ever visited Spain, and many consider that he went there after his liberation from Rome. *Bloomfield's* opinion is, that the apostle visited Spain, but that it is probable St James had planted the gospel in that country some years before, and that from its vast extent it would admit St Paul's labours, without his being said to build on another man's foundation.

25—27. We read only of one collection from the Macedonian churches by St. Paul, Acts. 20. 3, 4, which fixes the period at which this epistle was written to about A. D. 57.

25, 26. Three points are here noticed. 1. A contribution in Macedonia for the poor saints in Jerusalem. 2. The like in Achaia. 3. The apostle's intended journey to Jerusalem. Now the third is mentioned Acts 20, 2, 3; and from Acts 24, 17—19, we find the purpose was to bring alms. From 1 Cor. 16, 1—4, we find a contribution carrying on in Achaia, and St. Paul's intention to go to Jerusalem. In 2 Cor. 8, 1—4, we find that a collection had been made in Macedonia. Thus, we find in this epistle the apostle's intention to visit Jerusalem is mentioned, with connecting circumstances, confirmed by reference to three distinct writings, in which they are incidentally and separately mentioned. The quotation from Acts 20 shows that the Epistle to the Romans was written at the conclusion of St. Paul's second visit to Greece, which is further confirmed by the names joining the apostle in his salutation, Romans 16, 21—23. The mention of Eleastus, ver. 23, taken with 2 Tim. 4, 20, corroborates the fact of this epistle having been written at Corinth. The apostle's long intended visit to Rome is mentioned, Acts 19, 21; while the notice of Spain in one passage and not in the other, shows that they were not taken the one from the other — *Paley*.

Ver. 30—33. Though Paul was a great apostle, yet he begged the prayers of the meanest Christians, ver. 30—32. Interchanging prayers is an excellent token of the interchanging of love. Paul would hereby teach us how to value the effectual fervent prayers of the righteous. How careful should we be lest we forfeit our interest in the love and prayers of God's praying people! He urged them very closely: "I beseech you for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake;" he is my Master, I am going about his work, and his glory is interested in the success. For the love of the Spirit, ver. 30. As a proof and instance of that love which the Spirit works in the hearts of believers, one to another, pray for me; as a fruit of that communion which we have one with another by the Spirit, though we never saw one another. If ever you experienced the Spirit's love to you, be not wanting in this office of kindness.

Observe, how they must pray for him. Those that would prevail in prayer, must strive in prayer. We must pray with faith and fervency; wrestle with God, as Jacob; pray in praying, as Elijah, Jam. 5, 17; and stir up ourselves to take hold on God, Isa. 64, 7; not only in praying for ourselves, but for our friends. True love to our brethren should make us as earnest for them as the sense of our own need makes us for ourselves. He says, Strive together with me. Those who beg the prayers of others, must not neglect to

pray for themselves. He mentions particulars; in praying for ourselves and for our friends, it is good to be particular. Though Christ knows our state and wants perfectly, he will know them from us. Paul recommends himself to their prayers, with reference to the dangers to which he was exposed. We may pray against persecution. This prayer was answered in several remarkable deliverances of Paul, recorded Acts 21, 22, 23, 24. Also his services; pray, that my service which I have for Jerusalem, may be accepted of the saints, ver. 31. Was there any danger that it would not be accepted? Can money be otherwise than acceptable to the poor? Yes, there was some ground of suspicion in this case; for Paul was the apostle of the gentiles, and as the unbelieving Jews looked spitefully at him, which was their wickedness, so those that believed were shy of him upon that account, which was their weakness. As God must be sought for restraining the ill will of our enemies, so also for preserving and increasing the good will of our friends. To engage their prayers for him, he interests them in his concerns, ver. 32. That I may come unto you with joy. If his present journey to Jerusalem proved unsuccessful, his intended journey to Rome would be uncomfortable. All our joy depends upon the will of God.

There is another prayer of the apostle for them, ver. 33. Now the God of peace be with you all, Amen. He describes God under this title to recommend peace to them. Those who have the Fountain, cannot want any of the streams. With you all; both weak and strong. Those who are united in the blessing of God, should be united in affection one to another. Let us be earnest in prayer with and for each other, that for Christ's sake, and by the love of the Holy Spirit, great blessing may come upon the souls of Christians and the labours of ministers; that they may be accepted in their endeavours to do good wherever they go; that they may meet the people with joy, be refreshed by them, and that the God of peace may be the ever present Comforter of all who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity.

30. *Paley* compares this passage with Acts 20, 22, 23, and shows that they represent the state of the apostle's mind with respect to the

event of his journey to Jerusalem, in terms of substantial agreement, while Acts 20 confirms what might be expected, that his fears would be greater, and his hopes less, as he proceeded upon the journey. The earnest prayer of the apostle, with apparent hopes of success, that his visit to Rome would be with joy after his deliverance from the unbelieving jews, an anticipation so very far from being realized by the event, shows there could be no concert between the writer of this epistle and of the Acts, and that the epistle must have been written before Paul's arrival at Jerusalem.

CHAPTER XVI.

The apostle recommends Phoebe, a member of the church at Cenchrea, to the church at Rome, ver. 1, 2. Greet's several of his friends there by name, 3—16. Cautions the church against such as fomented divisions among them, 17—20. Mentions various persons that joined in christian salutations with him, 21—24. And concludes the epistle with ascribing glory to God, for extending the gospel revelation, with all its blessings, to gentiles, as well as jews, 25—27.

Ver. 1—16. Paul recommends Phoebe to the christians at Rome: an expression of his true friendship to her. Courtesy and christianity should be found together. He speaks of her as Phoebe, our sister; his sister in the faith of Christ. Both Christ and his apostles had some of their best friends among the devout, and upon that account honourable women. She seems to have been a person of some account; yet it was no disparagement to her to be a servant of the church. All christians in their places should strive to serve the church, for therein they serve Christ. She relieved many in want and distress. Wherever this epistle is read, her kindness to Paul is told for a memorial of her. He recommends her as worthy to be noticed with peculiar respect. Receive her in the Lord. Entertain her, bid her welcome for the Lord's sake; receive her as a servant and friend of Christ.

Being a woman, a stranger, a christian, she has need of help. It becomes christians to help one another in their affairs, especially strangers; we are members one of another, and know not what need of help we may have ourselves. Paul asks help for one that had been helpful to many; he that watereth, shall be watered also himself.

Here are commendations to some among those to whom he wrote. Though the care of all the churches came upon Paul daily, yet he could retain the remembrance of so many; and send salutations

to each, with particular characters of them, and expressions of concern for them. Greet them, salute them; let them know that I remember them, and love them, and wish them well.

1. Concerning Aquila and Priscilla. They were originally of Rome, but were banished thence, Acts 18. 2. At Corinth. Paul wrought with them at the trade of tent-making; after some time they returned to Rome, and thither he now sends commendations to them. He calls them his helpers in Christ Jesus; by private instructions and converse furthering the success of Paul's public preaching; one instance we have in their instructing Apollos, Acts 18. 26. Those are helpers to faithful ministers, who lay out themselves in their families and among their neighbours, to do good to souls. They hazarded their own lives for the preservation of his. He sends a greeting to the church in their house, ver. 5. Perhaps a congregation of christians used to meet at their house at stated times. Others think that the church was a religious, pious, well-governed family. Christ is present in the family worship of those who meet in his name, as in the more public assemblies of his saints. When Priscilla and Aquila were at Ephesus, though but sojourners, yet there also they had a church in their house, 1 Cor. 16. 19. A truly godly man will take his religion with him, wherever he goes.

2. Epenetus was not only one of the most eminent believers in that country, but one of the first converted to the faith of Christ. Special respect is to be paid to those that set out early, and come to work in the vineyard at the first hour, at the first call.

3. Concerning Mary, and some others who were laborious in that which is good; industrious christians: Mary, who bestowed much labour on us. True love takes pleasure in labour; where there is much love, there will be much labour. Among useful people, some are more useful than others, abounding more in the work of the Lord.

4. Andronicus and Junia, ver. 7, were akin to Paul; so was Herodion, ver. 11. Religion does not take away, but improves our respect to our kindred; engaging us to lay out ourselves for their good, and to rejoice in them the more, when we find them related to Christ by

faith. They were his fellow-prisoners. Partnership in suffering sometimes does much toward the union of souls. They were eminent for knowledge, and gifts, and graces. Who also were in Christ, that is, were converted to the christian faith, before him.

5. Concerning Apelles, who is here said to be approved in Christ, ver. 10, a high character! He was one of known integrity and sincerity in his religion, one that had been tried. He was a man to trust and repose confidence in.

6. Concerning Aristobulus and Narcissus, notice is taken of their households, which are in the Lord, ver. 10, 11, that were christians. Some think Narcissus was one of that name frequently mentioned in history, as a very rich man who had a great establishment, but was very wicked. There were some good, even in the family of a wicked man, a common case, 1 Tim. 6. 1. The poor servant is called, and chosen, and faithful, while the rich master perishes in unbelief! Even so, Father, because it seemed good unto thee.

7. Rufus, ver. 13, was a christian whose gifts and graces evidenced that he was chosen in Christ Jesus. He seems to have been the son of Simon, the Cyrenian, Mark 15. 21. And his mother and mine; his mother by nature, and Paul's by christian love and spiritual affection. He teaches Timothy to treat the elder women as mothers, 1 Tim. 5. 2. This good woman had been as a mother to Paul, in caring for him, and comforting him; Paul here gratefully owns it.

8. He salutes the brethren with them, ver. 14, and the saints with them, ver. 15, with them in family relations, with them in the bond of christian communion. Let any should find themselves aggrieved, as if Paul had forgotten them, he sends remembrance to the rest, as brethren and saints, though not named.

He concludes with recommending them to one another, mentioning their customary token of affection and unity. Every expression of regard and esteem should be used among believers in a holy manner. He adds, in the close, a general salutation to them all, in the name of the churches of Christ; The churches of Christ salute you; the churches I am accustomed to visit personally, as knit together in the bonds of the common christianity, desire to tes-

tify their affection to you, and good wishes for you. This is one way to maintain the communion of saints.

1. Cenchrea was the eastern port of Corinth, about nine miles from that city. Being more convenient than Lechæum, the western port, it was better frequented. According to the constitution of the primitive church, there was an order of females attending part of the public business of the church. 1. Elderly women, *presbutides*, presiding over, and superintending the morals of other christian females. 2. Deaconesses, who discharged some of the offices of the ministry, as baptizing the female converts; and who also collected and distributed the contributions for the relief of sick and poor females, besides other offices less important. See *Bingham*, &c.—*Bloomfield*. There were circumstances which rendered such servants more useful and necessary in the churches, at that time, than they would now generally be.—*Doddridge*.

3. We have here Aquila and Priscilla at Rome. St. Paul became acquainted with these persons in his first visit to Greece, Acts 18. 2, they accompanied him to Ephesus, ver. 18, and were there when he wrote his first epistle to the Corinthians. After writing that epistle, Paul staid some little time at Ephesus, he was a considerable time in Macedonia, and three months in Greece, and as this epistle to the Romans was written at the close of that second visit, a sufficient interval elapsed for the return of Aquila and Priscilla to Rome, so as to be there when the apostle wrote this greeting to them. *Paley* remarks how fully this shows that names and circumstances are so implicated with dates and places in writings like the present, that nothing but truth could preserve consistency. The dangers and persecutions the apostle experienced from the jews at Corinth, Acts 18, and the part these "helpers" evidently took in the admission of the gentiles to a religious equality with the jews, well entitled them to "thanks from the churches of the gentiles."

The mention of Phœbe as of Cenchrea, is one proof that this epistle was written at Corinth, and her having formerly succoured him, is explained by his having been at Cenchrea during his first visit to that neighbourhood, Acts 18. 18.

4. Submitted their necks to the sword, that is, hazarded their lives.

5. Perhaps, where we read of the church in any one's house, it is to intimate that the whole family were christians.—*Guyse*.

15. Had Peter then been at Rome, doubtless he would have been mentioned by name.

16. Saluting one another on the face, in token of respect and friendship, was an ancient and common custom, among both jews and gentiles, and was continued for some time among the primitive christians in their religious assemblies. Some consider the salute was given by each sex apart, as they then sat separately, and that by this symbol they showed that christians, as such, were equal. However, as the custom was not of Divine institution, and was afterwards abused, it was laid aside.

Macknight notes that the jews considered the kiss as an expression of friendship, 2 Sam. 20. 9; Luke 7. 45, and that the kiss spoken of by Justin Martyr in his account of the religious assemblies of the early christians, was called the holy kiss, to distinguish it from an amatory salute; and the kiss of love, 1 Pet. 5. 14, to dis-

tanglish it from the treacherous kisses of Joab and of Judas.

These directions to be kind and hospitable to one another, in which the customs of eastern countries are mentioned, are not literally to be observed by those among whom different manners prevail.—*T. H. Horne.*

Ver. 17—20. The apostle does not will and command, but for love's sake beseeches. How earnest, how endearing are Paul's exhortations! Whatever varies from the sound doctrine of the scriptures, opens a door to divisions and offences. If truth be once deserted, unity and peace will not last long. Mark those that thus cause divisions; observe them, the method they take; for commonly the pretences are plausible, when the projects are very pernicious. Avoid them: shun all unnecessary communication with the 1; do not embrace any principles or practices destructive to christian love and charity, or to the truth which is according to godliness. Men of this character had done much mischief at Corinth, whence this epistle was written, 2 Cor. 11. 1—6, 13—15, and Paul feared lest they should do the same at Rome.

Observe the description of the master they serve. Not our Lord Jesus Christ. Though they call themselves christians, they do not serve Christ; do not aim at his glory, promote his interest, or do his will, whatever they pretend. Many call Christ, Master and Lord, who are far from serving him. But they serve their carnal, sensual, worldly interests; pride, ambition, covetousness, luxury, licentiousness, these are the designs they are really carrying on. Also observe their methods. Their words and speeches have a show of holiness and zeal for God; and a show of kindness and love to those into whom they instil their corrupt doctrines. Thus by fair speeches the serpent beguiled Eve. They corrupt the head by deceiving the heart; perverting the judgments by insinuating themselves into the affections. We have great need to keep our hearts with all diligence.

Your obedience is come abroad unto all men, ver. 19; you are noted for a willing people. Because it was so, these seducing teachers would be the more apt to assault them. It has been the common policy of seducers, to set upon those who are softened by convictions, and who begin to inquire what they shall do, because such most easily receive the im-

pressions of their opinions. Sad experience witnesses that many who have begun to ask the way to Zion, have fatally split upon this rock. Paul suggests it with tenderness; not as suspicious of them, but as solicitous for them. A pliable temper is good when under good guidance; otherwise it may be very ensnaring, therefore he gives two general rules. 1. To be wise unto that which is good, to be skilful and intelligent in the truths and ways of God, lest we be imposed upon and deluded. 2. To be simple concerning evil; so wise as not to be deceived, and yet so simple as not to be deceivers. That man is wisely simple who knows not how to do any thing against the truth.

The apostle adds a very sweet promise, ver. 20. The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet. Observe,

1. When we come to God for spiritual victories, we must not only look to him as the Lord of hosts, from whom all power is, but as the God of peace, a God at peace with us, speaking peace to us, working peace in us, creating peace for us. Victory comes from God as the God of peace; for in all our conflicts, peace is what we must contend for. God, as the God of peace, will restrain and vanquish all that cause divisions and offences, and so break the peace of the church.

2. The blessing he expects from God, is victory over Satan. This comprehends all designs and devices of Satan against souls, to defile, disturb, and destroy them; all his attempts to keep us from the purity of heaven, the peace of heaven here, and the possession of heaven hereafter. He had cautioned them against simplicity: they might think, Will not these adversaries of our souls be at length too hard for us? No: fear not; though you cannot overcome in your own strength and wisdom, yet through Him that loved us we shall be more than conquerors. He shall bruise Satan under your feet: alluding to the first promise of the Messiah made in paradise, Gen. 3. 15. Christ hath overcome for us, disarmed the strong man armed, and broken his power; we have to pursue the victory and divide the spoil. Let this quicken us to fight the good fight of faith; we have to do with a conquered enemy.

The victory shall be speedy; He shall

do it shortly. When Satan seems to have prevailed, and we are ready to give up all as lost, then will the God of peace interpose in our behalf. Hold out therefore, faith and patience, yet a little while; when we are once got through the Red Sea, we shall see our spiritual enemies dead on the shore, and triumphantly sing the song of Moses, and the song of the Lamb! To this the apostle subjoins the benediction, The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you, the good will of Christ toward you, the good work of Christ in you, the pardoning mercy and the sanctifying grace of Christ. This will be the best preservative against the snares of heretics, and schismatics, and false teachers. If the grace of Christ be with us, who can prevail against us?

Ver. 21—24. The apostle adds affectionate remembrances from persons with him, and known to the Roman christians. Paul calls Timothy his son, but here he styles him his work-fellow, as one equal with him; and Lucius, probably Lucius of Cyrene, a noted man in the church of Antioch, Acts 13. 1, as Jason was at Thessalonica, where he suffered for entertaining Paul, Acts 17. 5, 6: and Sosipater, supposed the same with Sopater of Berea, Acts 20. 4. These last Paul calls his kinsmen. It is a great comfort to see the holiness and usefulness of our kindred. Tertius, who wrote this epistle: the least service done to the church, and the ministers of the church, shall not pass without remembrance.

Gaius, my host. Paul commends his hospitality to the church. Erastus, of Corinth, whence this epistle was dated. He was a person of honour and account, steward or treasurer. Not many mighty, not many noble, are called, but some are. His estate, honour, and employment, did not take him from promoting the good of the church in the ministry; for he is joined with Timothy, Acts 19. 22. It was no disparagement to the chamberlain of the city to preach the gospel of Christ. True religion does not require men to quit public stations when they can fill them to the glory of God and the benefit of his church. Quartus is called a brother; as one is our Father, even Christ, so all we are brethren.

21. Lucius is by many supposed to be the evangelist Luke. From Acts 20, we learn that

three out of the seven names here mentioned, were with St. Paul at the time this epistle appears to have been written.—See *Paley*.

22. Tertius is by some considered to have been the same as Silas, mentioned in the Acts as Paul's companion.

23. The word rendered chamberlain, appears to mean the city treasurer, the person who managed the revenues.—*Schleusner*. *Parr* remarks on this text, It is lawful for godly christians to bear civil offices; and it were to be wished that all offices in christian commonwealths and in the church, were bestowed upon the most prudent and zealous christians.

Ver. 25—27. The apostle solemnly closes with a magnificent ascription of glory to the blessed God, as one that studied to return all to him, seeing all is of him, and from him. Paul breathes out his soul to the Romans in praise of God, making that the end of his epistle, which he made the end of his life.

Paul calls the gospel of God his gospel; he was the preacher of it, and gloried in it. In giving God the glory of his power, we may take the comfort of it; that, whatever our doubts, and difficulties, and fears, may be, our God, whom we serve, is of power to stablish us. See 1 Pet. 1. 5; John 10. 29. It is the preaching of Jesus Christ; it began to be spoken by the Lord, Heb. 2. 3. Christ himself was the publisher of it. He is the subject of it; the sum and substance of the gospel is Jesus Christ, and him crucified. We preach not ourselves, says Paul, but Christ Jesus the Lord. That which stablishes souls, is, the plain preaching of Jesus Christ.

It is the revelation of the mystery which was kept secret since the world began, and made known by the scriptures of the prophets. Our redemption and salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, are, without controversy, a great mystery of godliness, 1 Tim. 3. 16. The gospel is the product of the eternal wisdom and counsel of God, and has in it such inconceivable heights, such unfathomable depths, as pass knowledge. It is a mystery the angels desire to look into. And yet, blessed be God, there is as much of this mystery made plain as will suffice to bring us to heaven, if we do not wilfully neglect so great salvation. Before the foundation of the world was laid, this mystery was hid in God, Eph. 3. 9. Since the world began, during all the times of the Old Testament, this mystery was comparatively kept secret in the types and shadows of the cere-

monial law, and the dark predictions of the prophets, which pointed at it. Thus it was hid from ages and generations, even among the Jews; much more among the Gentiles. And the disciples of Christ themselves, before his resurrection and ascension, were much in the dark about the mystery of redemption, their notion of it was confused. But it is now made manifest. Life and immortality are brought to light by the gospel, and the Sun of righteousness is risen on the world.

It is made manifest by the scriptures of the prophets, because the event being accomplished, they are now explained. The scriptures of the prophets, that which they left in writing, is not only made plain in itself, but by it this mystery is made known to all nations. If the New Testament explains the Old, the Old Testament much illustrates the New. To Christ all the prophets bear witness, Luke 24. 27.

It is manifested according to the purpose, counsel, and decree of God from eternity; and the commission and appointment given first to Christ, and then to the apostles, in the fulness of time. The everlasting God. He is *from* everlasting; though he had but lately revealed this mystery, yet he had determined it from everlasting, before the worlds were. And he is *to* everlasting; intimating the eternal continuance of this revelation, and its eternal consequences to us. Christ in the gospel, is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. It is made known to all nations for the obedience of faith. Christ is salvation to all nations. And the design and intention of it is very observable. The gospel is revealed, not to be talked of and disputed about, but to be submitted to. The obedience of faith is that obedience which is paid to the word of faith, Acts 6. 7, and which is produced by the grace of faith. See what is the right faith—even that which works in obedience; and what is the right obedience—even that which springs from faith; and what is the design of the gospel—to bring us to both.

But it matters little that the world now possesses a much clearer and fuller revelation of the mysteries of God, unless He to whom belongs wisdom and might condescends to be our teacher and helper. Without his establishing us we shall profit no more—perhaps far less—

in the faith and knowledge of the truth, than our forefathers, who may, notwithstanding, be said to have been in darkness with respect to religious knowledge, in comparison with the light which now shineth. In proof of this, how seldom has the gospel been received and understood according to the full revelation of it, made in this epistle and other writings of the apostles written after the time when the promised Spirit had been poured on them from on high.—(23.)

The apostle closes with a doxology to that God whose gospel it is, ver. 27; acknowledging he is a glorious God, and adoring him accordingly. To God only wise. He is only wise; not the Father only wise, exclusive of the Son, but Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, three Persons, and one God, only wise, compared with the creatures. Man, the wisest of all the creatures in the lower world, is born like a wild ass's colt; nay, the angels themselves are charged with folly, in comparison with God. He only is perfectly and infallibly wise; he only is originally wise, in and of himself: for he is the Spring and Fountain of all the wisdom of the creatures; the Father of all the lights of wisdom that any creature can pretend to, James 1. 17, with Him are strength and wisdom.

Observe the Mediator of this praise; "through Jesus Christ." It is in and through Christ that God is manifested to the world as the only wise God; for he is the wisdom of God, and the power of God. All the glory that passes from fallen man to God, so as to be accepted of him, must go through the Lord Jesus, in whom alone our persons and performances are, or can be, pleasing to God. Of his righteousness therefore we must make mention, even of his only; who, as he is the Mediator of all our prayers, so he is, and will be, to eternity, the Mediator of all our praises. Remembering that we are called to the obedience of faith, and that every degree of wisdom is from the only wise God, we should by word and deed render glory to him through Jesus Christ; that so the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ may be with us for ever. Amen.

25. Many consider that this doxology, ver. 25—27, properly should stand at the end of the fourteenth chapter.—See *Stade*,

THE FIRST EPISTLE TO THE CORINTHIANS.

CORINTH was a large city, the capital of Achaia, in Greece. The inhabitants were celebrated for their skill in the elegant arts, but their morals were most profligate and corrupt. The christian religion was first preached at Corinth by St. Paul, who remained there a year and a half, A. D. 51 to 53. We have an interesting account of the first introduction of the gospel into that city in Acts 18, which the reader will do well to peruse before he enters upon the study of this epistle. The Corinthian church contained some jews, but more gentiles, and here, as elsewhere, the apostle had to contend with the superstition of the one, and the licentiousness of the other. Apollos preached there with much success after the apostle departed, Acts 18. 27. Aquila and Sosthenes also were teachers in this church, Acts 18. 2; 1 Cor. 1. 1. It appears that soon after St. Paul left, the peace of this church was disturbed by false teachers, who made great pretensions to knowledge of christian liberty, also to eloquence and wisdom, and undermined the influence of the apostle. Two parties were the result; one contending earnestly for the Jewish ceremonies, the other indulging in excesses contrary to the gospel, to which they were especially led by the luxury and licentiousness prevalent around them.

This epistle was written to rebuke the disorderly conduct of which the apostle had been apprized, and to impart advice as to some points whereon his judgment was requested by a letter from the Corinthians themselves. Thus the scope was twofold. 1. To apply suitable remedies to the disorders and abuses which prevailed among them. 2. To give satisfactory answers on all the points on which his advice and information had been desired. Under these heads a summary of the contents of the epistle may be given.

1. The disorders which prevailed in the Corinthian church. 1. Schisms and divisions, ch. 1. 10-31 3. 3, 4. 2 The prevalence of impurity and licentiousness, and even of incest, 5 6. 9-20. 3 Their covetous and litigious temper, which led them to prosecute their christian brethren before heathen courts, 6. 1-8. 4 Communing with the heathen at their idol feasts, 8. 9-10. 5 Want of order in their public worship, 11. 2-16. 14. 6 Profaneness and indecorum in receiving the Lord's supper, 11 17-24. 7. Denial of the resurrection and eternal life, 15.

11. The advices given may be stated as, 1. Concerning marriage, 7. Here the apostle takes occasion to show that christianity does not interfere with the civil conditions of men, but leaves them under the same obligations as before their conversion, ver. 17-24. 2. Concerning things offered to idols, 8. 9, 10. 3. Spiritual gifts, 12. 13. 4. Prophesying or teaching others, 14, 5. Concerning the making charitable collections for the poor brethren in Judea, 16. The apostle concludes with a promise that he would shortly visit them, and adds various salutations.

The genuineness of the epistles to the Corinthians never has been doubted. From 1 Cor. 5. 7. where the apostle uses the expression, Ye are unleavened, that is, now celebrating the feast of unleavened bread, it appears to have been written at the time of the passover, and that the last before he left Ephesus, see 1 Cor 16 8. He resided at Ephesus three years, see Acts 18. 18-23; 19. 1; 20. 31, and left that city about A. D. 57, consequently the first epistle to the Corinthians was written about that period.

The address and christian suavity, yet firmness, with which the apostle writes, and proceeds from general truths directly to oppose the errors and evil conduct of the Corinthians, is very remarkable. He states the truth, and the will of God, relative to various particulars, with great energy of argument and animation of style.

CHAPTER I.

The apostle Paul prefaces this epistle with an assertion of his apostolic authority; a salutation of the church at Corinth; and a congratulation on account of their conversion, and the gifts bestowed upon them, ver. 1-9. Exhorts them to brotherly love, and reproves them for the divisions which he had heard were among them, 10-17. Asserts and vindicates the doctrine of a crucified Saviour, and his own plain way of preaching it, as a fundamental article of the christian faith, and as admirably calculated to advance the glory of God, and humble the creature before him, 18-31.

Ver. 1-9 The apostle begins with declaring that God had, by his mere grace

and sovereign will, called him to the apostleship. He joins with himself in this salutation. Sosthenes, a brother, not a fellow-apostle, but a fellow-minister; once a ruler of a Jewish synagogue, afterward a convert to christianity, a Corinthian. This epistle was directed to the church of God that was at Corinth, sanctified in Christ Jesus, and called to be saints. All christians are by baptism dedicated and devoted to Christ, they are under strict obligations to be holy. But the true church of God comprises all who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, and who call upon him as God manifest in the flesh, for all the blessings of salvation, who

acknowledge and obey him as their Lord, and as Lord of all, and it includes no other persons. It is the design of christianity to sanctify us in Christ. He gave himself for us, to redeem us from all iniquity, and purify us to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. With the church at Corinth, the epistle is directed to all that in every place call on the name of Christ Jesus our Lord. Christians are distinguished from the profane and atheist—that they dare not live without prayer; and they are distinguished from Jews and pagans—that they call on the name of Christ. In every place, in the christian world, there are some that call on the name of Christ; and we should have concern for, and hold communion with all that call on Christ's name. This shows how inseparable the calling upon Christ is from the profession of christianity.

Observe how often in these verses the apostle repeats the words, Our Lord Jesus Christ. How striking the contrast of this language, to that of many professed christians, even ministers! The name of the Lord Jesus was to him as the sweetest melody. He feared not to make too frequent, or too honourable mention of him. To all who called upon Christ, the apostle gave his usual salutation, desiring, in their behalf, the pardoning mercy, sanctifying grace, and comforting peace of God, through Jesus Christ. This blessing the gospel brings with it, and this blessing every preacher of the gospel should heartily wish and pray may be the lot of all among whom he ministers. Grace and peace; the favour of God, and reconciliation to him. It is indeed the summary of all blessings. The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace, was the benediction under the Old Testament, Numb. 6. 26, but by the gospel we are directed how to obtain that peace from God; it is in and by Christ. Sinners can have no peace with God, nor any good from him, but through Christ.

He gives thanks for their conversion to the faith of Christ; that grace was given them by Jesus Christ, ver. 4. Those who are united to him by faith, and made to partake his Spirit and merits, are the objects of Divine favour. God loves them, bears them hearty goodwill, and bestows on them his fatherly smiles and blessings. They had been

enriched by him with all spiritual gifts, and miraculously enabled to speak in divers languages, and with abundant knowledge of Divine things. He specifies utterance and knowledge. Where God has given these two gifts, he has given great capacity for usefulness. Many have the flower of utterance, that have not the root of knowledge; and their converse is barren. Many have the treasure of knowledge, and want utterance to employ it for the good of others; and then it is in a manner wrapped up in a napkin. But where God gives both, a man is qualified for eminent usefulness. These gifts were a testimony to the truth of the christian doctrine, a confirmation of the testimony of Christ among them, ver. 6. They were signs and wonders, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, by which God bore witness to the apostles, so that the more plentifully they were poured forth on any church, the more full attestation was given to that doctrine which was delivered by the apostles, the more confirming evidence they had of their Divine mission. They were inferior to no other church in spiritual gifts, ver. 7.

With these they edified one another, as those who waited for the coming of Christ, their Lord and Judge, before new teachers came among them. Christians wait for Christ's second coming; all our religion has regard to that: we believe it, and hope for it, and it is the business of our lives to prepare for it, if we are christians indeed. The more confirmed we are in the christian faith, the more firm is our belief of our Lord's second coming, and the more earnest our expectation of it. We should seek continued supplies of his grace to confirm us to the end of our course, in the faith and hope of the gospel, that we may be guided in our conduct through life, and stand completely justified and sanctified in the day of judgment.

The encouraging hopes of the apostle were founded on the power and love of Christ, and the faithfulness of God, ver. 8, 9. He who had begun a good work in them, and carried it on thus far, would not leave it unfinished. Those that wait for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ will be kept by him, and confirmed to the end; and those that are so, will render rich and free grace blameless in the day of Christ.

How desirable is it to be confirmed and kept by Christ for such a purpose! How glorious are the hopes of such a privilege! To be kept by the power of Christ from the power of our corruptions and Satan's temptations, that we may appear without blame in the great day! O glorious expectation! and the faithfulness of God comes in to support our hopes! He who hath called us into the fellowship of his Son, is faithful, and will do it, 1 Thess. 5. 24. He who hath brought us into near and dear relation to Christ, into sweet and intimate communion with Christ, is faithful; he may be trusted with our dearest concerns. Those that come at his call, shall never be disappointed in their hopes in him. If we approve ourselves faithful to God, we shall never find him unfaithful to us. He will not suffer his faithfulness to fail, Ps. 89. 33.

2 J. P. Smith states full and satisfactory reasons to show that this passage and others similar, lay down the devotional invocation of the Lord Jesus Christ, as a known and undoubted designation of his followers.

Ver. 10—17. The apostle proceeds to point out the evil which gave rise to various abuses he meant to reprove. He besought them to cease from murmurings and disputings, that they would unite in the same language of faith, and be joined together in the same mind and judgment. He writes to them in a very engaging way; "I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; if you have any regard to that dear and worthy name by which you are called, speak all the same thing;" avoid divisions or schisms, as the original is, all alienation of affection from each other. In the great things of religion be of one mind; and where there is not unity of sentiment, let there be union of affection. Our agreement in the greater things should extinguish divisions about the less. As we have one rule and standard of truth, and one Spirit to be our Teacher, so in proportion to our humility, simplicity, and diligence we come to be of one mind and judgment, and, were we perfect in these things, we should be perfectly united in sentiment and affection. This will be the case in heaven, and the nearer we approach it on earth, the nearer we come to perfection.

He hints at the origin of the contentious. They differed about their minis-

ters. Paul and Apollos both were faithful ministers of Jesus Christ, and helpers of their faith and joy; but those disposed to be contentious, broke into parties, and cried up their ministers, and some were for Christ only. So liable are the best things to be corrupted, and the gospel and its institutions, which are at perfect harmony, are made the engines of variance, discord, and contention. This is no reproach to religion, but a melancholy evidence of the corruption and depravity of human nature. How far pride will carry christians in opposition to one another!

He expostulates upon their discord and quarrels; Is Christ divided? No, there is but one Christ, therefore christians should be of one heart. Was Paul crucified for you? Was he your sacrifice and atonement? Did he ever pretend to be your saviour, or any more than a minister? Or, were ye baptized in the name of Paul? Were ye devoted to my service, or engaged to be my disciples, by that sacred rite? No; ministers, however instrumental of good to us, are not to be put in Christ's stead. They are not to usurp Christ's authority, nor encourage any thing in the people, that looks like taking his authority to themselves. He is our Saviour and Sacrifice, he is our Lord and Guide. Happy were it for the churches, if there were no name of distinction among them, as Christ is not divided. Satan has always endeavoured to stir up strife among christians as one of his chief devices against the gospel. Thus professors become disciples of men, and, regardless of the apostle's expostulations, glory in ranking as partisans of this or the other preacher.

The apostle thanks God he had baptized but few among them, ver. 14. He is not to be understood, as thankful for not having baptized at all, but for not having done it in present circumstances, lest it should have had a bad construction put upon it—that he had baptized in his own name, made disciples for himself, or set himself up as the head of a sect. He left it to other ministers to baptize, while he set himself to more useful work, preaching the gospel. This he thought was more important business. In this sense he says, Christ sent him not to baptize, but to preach the gospel; not so much to baptize as to preach. Ministers should esteem

themselves sent, and and set apart more especially to that service in which Christ will be most honoured, and the salvation of souls promoted, and for which they are best fitted; though no part of their duty is to be neglected. The principal business Paul did among them was to preach; to preach the gospel, ver. 17, the cross, ver. 18, Christ crucified, ver. 23. Paul had been bred up in Jewish learning, but in preaching Christ he laid his learning aside. He preached a crucified Jesus in plain language; that Jesus who was crucified at Jerusalem, was the Son of God and Saviour of men; and all who would be saved must repent of their sins, and believe in him. The plain preaching of a crucified Jesus was more powerful than all the oratory and philosophy of the heathen world.* Ministers are the soldiers of Christ, and are to erect and display the banner of the cross. Paul did not preach his own fancies, but the gospel; the glad tidings of peace and reconciliation to God, through the mediation of a crucified Redeemer. This is the sum and substance of the gospel. Christ crucified is the foundation of all our hopes, the fountain of all our joys. By his death we live. This is what Paul preached, what all ministers should preach, and what all the saints live upon.

10. "Divisions" or Schisms. A schism, therefore, besides signifying an outward distinction or separation, resulting from jarring opinions and expressions, is a violation of that union of affection among Christians, in which the spirit, the life, and power of religion are principally placed.—*Talpy*.

11 *Paley* notices, that though the Corinthians had written to the apostle, desiring his advice on several points, it does not appear that they had said anything about the disorders and enormities which prevailed among them.

13 Or, Is Christ personally separated from his doctrine? The founders of the different systems of heathen philosophy were merely the framers of them. Had Socrates or Zeno never existed, still their respective systems might have been known to the world. Therefore there was nothing to hinder those who professed these systems from giving a preference to the persons from whom they immediately derived their knowledge, to the entire neglect of the original promulgator. But of the Christian religion our Lord is an essential part, consequently it is impossible to profess it rightly without exclusive attachment to him.—*Tolley*.

15. Or, "So that no one can say."

Ver. 18—25. We have here the different effects of preaching Christ. 1. The preaching salvation for lost sinners by

the sufferings and death of the Son of God, if fully explained and faithfully applied, must appear foolishness to those in the way to destruction, ver. 18. The sensual, the covetous, the proud, and ambitious, alike see the gospel as opposed to their favourite pursuits. The scribe, the sadducee, and the heathen philosopher, each would have his reasons for deriding and reviling it. But those who had been brought into a state of salvation by faith, knew this despised doctrine to be the suitable means, by which the power of God wrought in pulling down the kingdom of Satan, and converting sinners to himself. Christ crucified, was indeed a stumbling-block to the Jews. They could not get over it. They expected the Messiah was to be a great temporal prince, and therefore would never own one who made so mean an appearance in life, and died so accursed a death, for their Deliverer and King. He was to the Greeks foolishness. They laughed at the idea of a crucified Saviour, and despised the apostles for telling it. There was nothing in the plain doctrine of the cross to suit their taste, or humour their vanity, or gratify a curious and wrangling temper; they entertained with scorn and contempt the hope to be saved by one who did not save himself, and trust in one who was condemned and crucified for a malefactor; a man of mean birth and poor condition in life, and cut off by an opprobrious death! This the pride of human reason and learning could not relish. It is just with God to leave those to themselves, who pour proud contempt on Divine wisdom and grace.

2. To them which are called and saved, he is the Wisdom of God, and the Power of God. Those who are called and sanctified, who receive the gospel, and are enlightened by the Spirit of God, discern more glorious discoveries of God's wisdom and power in the doctrine of Christ crucified than in all his other works. Those who are saved, are reconciled to the doctrine of the cross, and led into an experimental acquaintance with the mysteries of Christ crucified. And as to the opinions of the wise men of the world, God had declared that he would destroy their wisdom, and bring it to nothing, Job 5, 13; Is. 26, 14. Indeed, the wise philosophers and disputer of this world agreed in nothing

except in rejecting and despising the gospel, and the folly of their wisdom had been made most evident. God, in his infinite wisdom, had left a great part of the world to follow the dictates of man's boasted reason, and the event had shown that human wisdom was incompetent to find or retain the knowledge of God as the Creator. At length it pleased God to send forth his apostles and evangelists to preach the doctrine which was regarded as foolishness, they delivered their message in the simplest manner, and wonderful effects followed. Vast numbers believed the report, were saved from their idolatries and iniquities, and became accepted worshippers and servants of the living God. It pleased him, by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe. By the foolishness of preaching—not by what could justly be called foolish preaching. But the thing preached was foolishness in the eyes of worldly wise men. And none of the men famous for wisdom or eloquence were employed to plant the church, or propagate the gospel. A few fishermen were sent upon this errand!

The Jewish scribes indeed, not pleased with a spiritual salvation, demanded a sign from heaven, and a Messiah who should come with outward pomp and observation, ver. 22; while the Greeks wanted a doctrine suited to their supposed wisdom, and supported by reasonings and speculations like their own. But the servants of God preached Christ crucified; this was the peculiar point of their doctrine, the centre from whence all their instructions and exhortations proceeded. The methods of Divine conduct which vain men censure as unwise and weak, have far more true, solid, and successful wisdom in them, than all the learning and wisdom that are among men. The doctrine of salvation by faith in a crucified Jew, which appeared to the carnal mind a foolish device; and the preaching of it by unlearned and obscure persons, which appeared a weak expedient, had, by the power of God accompanying it, done more in a few years towards making men wise and holy, than all the learning of Jewish scribes and pagan philosophers, or the power of armed force had been able to effect, or ever would have effected to the end of time. Too often the cross of Christ is rendered of none effect, by vain

attempts to recommend it to the world. The preacher may have his worthless reward in human applause, but the Spirit of God will not set his seal to a carnalized gospel—it proves the mere shadow of a feast at which the guests are starved. Such attempts ever must be unsuccessful. The gospel ever was and ever will be foolishness, to such as are in the road to destruction. The message of Christ, plainly delivered, ever has been a sure touchstone by which men may learn what road they are travelling. But the despised doctrine of salvation by faith in a crucified Saviour, God in human nature, purchasing the church with his own blood, to save multitudes, even all that believed, from ignorance, delusion, and vice, has been blessed in every age. It is not less a stumbling block to some, and foolishness to others, than it was in the days of the apostle, but it is now, as then, known and experienced to be the wisdom and power of God. Nor is there stronger proof of man's depravity and folly, than that, notwithstanding facts and arguments, they persist in treating this wisdom of God as foolishness, and this power of God as weakness, though no devices or efforts of man can produce beneficial effects like those which, it cannot be denied, are wrought thereby.

21. By the wisdom of God is here not to be understood that wisdom which had God for its author, but that which had God for its object; and should be rendered, wisdom about God!—The world in its divinity, could not, by its wisdom, know God.—*Lightfoot*.

22. Diligent investigation and eager pursuit after what they considered to be wisdom, was peculiarly the character of the Greeks.

22, 23. For while the Jews require, &c.—We preach, &c.—*Scholefield*.

23. *Trypho*, as a Jew, is represented by *Justin Martyr* as saying, "Your Jesus having fallen under the extremest curse of the law of God, we cannot sufficiently wonder that you should expect any good from God, who place your hopes in a man that was crucified." And again, "We doubt of your Christ, who was so ignominiously crucified, for our law styles every one that is crucified, accursed." The same writer speaks of the heathen as saying, "They count us mad, that after the immutable and eternal God, the Father of all things, we give the second place to a man that was crucified." Augustine says, "The wise men of the world insult over us, and ask, Where is your understanding who worship him for a God who was crucified?"—*Whitby*.

25. The weakest instruments which God uses, are stronger in their effects, than the strongest which men can use.—Not that there is foolishness or weakness in God, but that men account and deride as such overcomes all their admired wisdom and strength.—*Burkitt*.

Ver. 26—31. The Corinthians might themselves see that the gospel had not been preached to them with wisdom of words; not by outward aid of learning and philosophy: and God did not choose philosophers, nor orators, nor statesmen, nor men of wealth and power and interest in the world, to publish the gospel of grace and peace. Not the wise men after the flesh; though men might think that reputation for wisdom and learning would contribute much to the success of the gospel. Not the mighty and noble, however men might imagine that worldly pomp and power would make way for its reception in the world. But God seeth not as man seeth. He is the best judge of what instruments and measures serve the purposes of his glory.

Yet there is nothing in the doctrines of the gospel to justify the neglect or rejection of it by the wise and the noble. It is in itself an object for contemplation, sufficiently interesting to engage the serious attention of the most refined and cultivated minds. Though not many noble are usually called by Divine grace, there have been some such in every age, who have not been ashamed of the gospel of Christ. These have been raised up to protect the servants of God by their power, and to aid them with their substance. None are excluded from mercy on account of their birth and talents, and persons of every rank stand in need of pardoning grace.—(87.)

Few of distinguished rank and character were called to be christians; as the preachers were poor and mean, so generally were the converts. Few of the wise, and mighty, and noble, in the opinion of the world, embraced the doctrine of the cross. The first christians, both among jews and greeks, were men of small advantages, as to their mental improvements, and very mean rank and condition as to their outward estate: yet what glorious discoveries are there of Divine wisdom in the gospel, and in this particular circumstance of its success! And these despised men, being made wise, holy, and useful by the grace of the gospel, confounded those who had formerly treated them with the utmost contempt. All is fitted admirably—

1. To beat down the pride and vanity of men, ver. 27. God chose the foolish things of the world, to confound the

wise: men of no learning, to confound the most learned; the weak things of the world to confound the mighty; men of mean rank and circumstances to confound and prevail against all the power and authority of earthly kings: and base things, and things which are despised, things which men have in the lowest esteem, or in the utmost contempt, to pour contempt and disgrace on all they value and have in veneration: and things which are not, to bring to nought, to abolish, things that are.

God chooses those despised on account of their poverty, to enrich them with the treasures of his grace; and the young and ignorant he guides by his Holy Spirit into the way of life; the poor have the gospel preached to them, and praise is perfected out of the mouth of babes, ver. 28. We may often meet a humble christian, in an obscure situation, who has more experimental knowledge of the gospel than those who have made the letter of scripture the study of their lives, and young children have attained such acquaintance with Divine truth as to silence infidels. The reason is, they are taught of God; the design is, that no flesh should glory in his presence.—(87.)

The conversion of the gentiles, of whom the jews had the most contemptuous and vilifying thoughts, was to open a way to the abolishing that system upon which they valued themselves so much, as for the sake of it to despise the rest of the world. It was common for the jews to speak of the gentiles under this character, as things that are not. The apostle Paul seems to have this common language of the jews in his view. See Rom. 4. 17. The gospel is fitted to shame the boasted science of the greeks, and to take down all on which the jews valued themselves, and despised others; that no flesh should glory in God's presence, ver. 29, that there might be no pretence for boasting. Divine wisdom alone contrived the method of redemption: Divine grace alone revealed it, and made it known. It was, in both respects, out of human reach. And the doctrine and discovery prevailed, in spite of all the opposition it met with from human art or authority: so effectually did God veil the glory, and disgrace the pride of man in all. The gospel dispensation is to humble man. Why then should the Corinthians value these vain endowments in

their teachers. Nor is there a stronger proof of man's depravity, blindness, and folly, than that neither facts nor arguments prevent him from treating this wisdom of God as foolishness, this power as weakness, though no human devices or efforts can produce effects to be compared with those which men must own are wrought of God.

2. It is as admirably fitted to glorify God. Though the ministers were poor and unlearned, and the converts generally of the meanest rank, yet the spirit of the Lord went with the preachers, and was mighty in the hearts of the hearers: and Jesus Christ was made to both, what was truly great and honourable. And that distinction, in which alone they might glory, was not of themselves. It was of Him, by the sovereign choice and regenerating grace of God, that they, sinners of the gentiles, were in Jesus Christ by faith, who by the appointment and free mercy of God was made to all believers the whole of salvation. All we have, we have from God as the fountain, and in and through Christ as the channel of conveyance. He is made of God to us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, ver. 30, all we need, or can desire. We are foolishness, ignorant and blind in the things of God, with all our boasted knowledge. And he is made wisdom to us, that by his word and Spirit, and from his fulness and treasures of wisdom and knowledge, we may receive all that instruction and counsel which may make us wise unto salvation, and, for every service to which we are called. We are guilty, obnoxious to justice; and he is made righteousness, our great atonement and sacrifice. We are depraved and corrupt; and he is made sanctification, the spring of our spiritual life: from him, the Head, it is communicated to all the members of his mystical body by his Holy Spirit. We are in bonds, and he is made redemption to us, our Saviour and Deliverer. Observe, where Christ is made righteousness to any soul, he is also made sanctification. He never discharges from the guilt of sin, without delivering from the power of it; and he is made righteousness and sanctification, that he may in the end be made complete redemption, and free the soul from the very being of sin, and loose the body from the bonds of the grave.

What is designed in all, is, that all flesh may glory in the Lord, ver. 31. That according to the ancient prophecy by Jeremiah, ch. 9. 23, they may glory in the special favour, all-sufficient grace, and precious salvation of Jehovah, though in themselves they have nothing to glory in, but every thing of which to be ashamed. Here again the apostle refers to Jesus, the Lord our righteousness and strength, what the prophet spake of Jehovah. Observe, it is the will of God, that all our glorying should be in the Lord: and our salvation being only through Christ, it is thereby effectually provided that it should be so. Man is humbled, and God glorified and exalted by the gospel. Let us not fear knowing how vile and worthless we are; for thus sinners are brought by sovereign grace to believe in Christ, who of God is made to them wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption, so that having all in him, we may be satisfied to have nothing of ourselves. And when most covered with shame at the discovery of our own folly and blindness, may we learn to glory in the Lord and his salvation; may we glorify him on earth, and be preserved as monuments of his love, to praise him for ever in heavenly happiness! Let men call it folly, weakness, enthusiasm, madness, or what they please, may we show in our lives that it is a wise, holy, and blessed doctrine, and we shall feel in our hearts that it gives a peace from God, that passes understanding.

28. In other words, God hath chosen the gentiles to become his church and people, and so to cause the Jewish church and economy to cease. —See *Whitby*.

CHAPTER II.

The apostle proceeds to remind the Corinthians of the plain manner in which he preached a crucified Christ to them, ver. 1-5. The excellent wisdom contained in this doctrine, 6-9. It cannot be duly known and received, but by the light and influence of the Holy Spirit, 10-16.

Ver. 1-5. The apostle reminds the Corinthians how he first preached the gospel among them. He came not among them with excellency of speech or wisdom, ver. 1. He did not affect to appear an orator, or a philosopher; nor did he use fine words, or a show of science and skill. Neither his speech, nor the

wisdom he taught, needed human ornaments. He came among them, declaring the testimony of God. He published a Divine revelation, and showed the authority for it, both by its agreement with ancient predictions, and by present miraculous operations. He determined to know nothing among them but Jesus Christ, and him crucified; to preach nothing, to discover the knowledge of nothing, but Jesus Christ, and him crucified. Christ, in his person and offices, is the sum and substance of the gospel, and ought to be the great subject of a gospel minister's preaching. His business is to display the banner of the cross, and invite people under it. Whatever other knowledge he had, this was the only knowledge he discovered, and showed himself concerned to propagate among his hearers, ver. 2.

He delivered his message as if he had known no other subject than that of Jesus the Messiah, even him that was crucified, who was so generally despised, and those things that related to redemption for sinners through his blood. This was the centre and substance of his preaching, but not to the exclusion of other parts of God's revealed truth and will; he preached, as we know, from his writings, the whole counsel of God.

In adhering to this determination, he had been deeply sensible of his own weakness and insufficiency, and was even oppressed with fear lest his infirmities should prevent his success, or disgrace his glorious doctrine. Few know the fear and trembling of faithful ministers, who are jealous over souls with a godly jealousy: and a deep sense of their own weakness occasions this fear and trembling. They know how insufficient they are, and are fearful for themselves.

Thus his address and manner of preaching had been entirely devoid of the persuasive words of human wisdom, yet he spake with authority, in the demonstration of the Spirit, and of power. He preached the truths of Christ with plainness of speech. And this faithful address to men's consciences, the Spirit of God usually employed as the means of convincing them of sin, and powerfully demonstrating the truth and preciousness of the gospel to their souls, that thus their faith might not stand in or rest upon the wisdom of men, but the power of God. That they might not be

drawn by human motives, or overcome by mere human arguments. When nothing but Christ crucified was plainly preached, the success must be entirely attributed to Divine power accompanying the word. Their faith must be founded, not on human wisdom, but Divine evidence and operations. The gospel was so preached, that God might appear and be glorified in all. That faith which is the effect of the inward and powerful teaching and demonstration of the Spirit, which rests upon and is supported by the power of God, is certainly saving, and will endure through all trials, even to the end, and thus men are brought to believe, to the salvation of their souls.

Ver. 6—9. The apostle had communicated a treasure of true wisdom: We speak wisdom among them who are perfect, ver. 6, among those who are well instructed in christianity, and come to some maturity in the things of God. To such persons they laid open all the rich treasures of the wisdom of God, in his method of saving sinners, and in the dispensations of his providence. Those who receive the doctrine as Divine, and, having been enlightened by the Holy Spirit, have looked well into it, discover true wisdom in it. They see not only the plain history of Christ, and him crucified, but discern the deep and admirable designs of Divine wisdom therein. Though what is preached be foolishness to the world, it is wisdom to them. They are made wise by it, and can discern wisdom in it. Not worldly wisdom, but Divine; not such as men of this world could discover, nor such as worldly men, under the conduct of pride, passion, appetite, and worldly interest, and destitute of the Spirit of God, can receive. How different is the judgment of God from that of the world! The wisdom he teaches is quite different from what passes under that notion in the world. It is not the wisdom of politicians, nor philosophers, nor rabbis, see ver. 6, but the wisdom of God in a mystery, what had long been concealed from the world, and the depth of which, now it is revealed, none but himself can fathom. It is the mystery which hath been hid from ages and generations, though now made manifest to the saints, Col. 1. 26, hid from the heathen world, and made

mysterious to the jews, by being wrapped up in dark types and distant prophecies, but revealed and made known by the Spirit of God. Observe the privilege of those who enjoy the gospel revelation: to them types are unveiled, mysteries made plain, prophecies interpreted, and the secret counsels of God laid open.

Concerning this wisdom, observe,

1. The rise and original of it; it was ordained of God, before the world, to our glory, ver. 7. The counsels of God concerning our redemption are from eternity, and designed for the glory and happiness of the saints. And what deep wisdom was in these counsels!

2. The ignorance of the great men of the world about it, ver. 8. The Roman governor, and the guides and rulers of the jewish church and nation were princes of this world, or this age, who, had they known this true and heavenly wisdom, would not have crucified the Lord of glory. Observe, Jesus Christ is the Lord of glory; a title much too great for any creature. There are many things which people would not do, if they knew the wisdom of God in the great work of redemption.

3. Such wisdom could not have been discovered without a revelation; Isa. 64.

4. It was a testimony of love to God, in the jewish believers, to live in expectation of the accomplishment of promises. Waiting upon God is an evidence of love to him. Observe, there are things which God hath prepared for them that love him, and wait for him. There are such things prepared in a future life for them. Things which sense cannot discover, no present information can convey to our ears, nor can yet enter our hearts. But the apostle speaks here of the Divine revelation under the gospel. Observe, the great truths of the gospel are out of reach of mere human discovery. Were they objects of sense, could they be discovered by an eye of reason, and communicated by the ear to the mind, as matters of common human knowledge may, there had been no need of a revelation. But, being out of the system of nature, we can only discover them by the light of revelation. Therefore we must take them as they stand in the scriptures, as God has been pleased to reveal them to us.

The principles which led the princes of this world to crucify the Lord of glory

still possess the minds of men; covetousness, sensuality, and carnal ambition still despise and disregard the good things which God hath prepared for those who love him, though they pass man's understanding, and infinitely excel in glory whatever he has seen or imagined.

Ver. 10—16. We here see by whom true wisdom is discovered to us: God hath revealed it to us by his Spirit, ver. 10. The scripture is given by inspiration of God, 2 Pet. 1. 21. And the apostles spake and wrote by inspiration of the same Spirit, as he gave utterance. Here is a proof of the Divine authority of the holy scriptures. In proof of the Divinity of the Holy Ghost, observe that, omniscience is attributed to him: he searches all things, even the deep things of God. He has exact knowledge of all things, and enters into the most secret counsels of God. Who can have such thorough knowledge of God, but God? He who is one with, yet personally distinct from the eternal Father, not only searched all hearts, but was intimately acquainted with the deep things of God, and all the inmost counsels of his infinite mind. No man can know another's thoughts and intentions, as his own rational soul is conscious of them. No one can know, discover, or comprehend the things of God, but his own infinite Spirit, who is One with the Father and the Son, in the unity of the Godhead, and whose office it is to reveal Divine mysteries to his church. This is most decisive testimony, both to the real Godhead and the distinct personality of the Holy Spirit.

The apostles had not received the spirit of the world, ver. 12; they were not actuated by worldly principles, nor guided by that carnal prudence, of which Satan, the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience, is the concealed author; but they were inspired and actuated by the Spirit of God, that they might know and communicate to the church, those things which God has prepared for all believers, and freely bestows upon them—the great privileges of the gospel, which are the free gift of God, distributions of mere and rich grace. Though these things are given us, and the revelation of this gift be made to us, we cannot know them to

any saving purpose, till we have the Spirit, until He removes the veil from our hearts, and enables us to understand their real excellency. The apostles had the revelation of these things from the Spirit of God, and the saving impression of them from the same Spirit. The truths of God are best expressed in the words the Holy Ghost teaches.

These things they declared, not in such words as human wisdom would have suggested, but in plain simple language, taught by the Holy Spirit, formed by comparing one part of Divine revelation with another, the spiritual nature of redemption with the holiness of the Divine character and law; the former discoveries of God's truth and will with the later ones, the types and prophecies with their fulfilment; the remedy proposed, with the state of mankind, and their need of such a remedy, ver. 13. To compare matters of revelation with matters of science, things supernatural with things natural and common, is going by a wrong measure. Spiritual things illustrate one another; but if the principles of human art and science are to be made a test of revelation, we shall certainly judge amiss concerning it. The apostles, under the teaching of the Holy Spirit, used a solemn, energetic, faithful method of speaking, totally differing from the affected oratory or the enticing words of man's wisdom. We have an account how this wisdom is received.

1. The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned, ver. 14. The natural man, the animal man. (1.) The man under the power of corruption, not yet illuminated by the Spirit of God. Men unsanctified receive not the things of God. The understanding, through the corruption of nature by the fall, and by habits of sin, is utterly unfit to receive the Divine light. The man looks on the truths of God as trifling, not worth minding. The light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not, John 1. 5. Not that the natural faculty of discerning is lost, but evil inclinations and wicked principles render the man unwilling to enter into spiritual matters, and yield to their force and power. It is the quickening beams of the Spirit of truth and holiness, that must help the

mind to discern the excellency, and to feel a conviction of the truth, so as heartily to receive and embrace it. Thus the natural man, the man destitute of the Spirit of God, cannot know them, because they are spiritually discerned. (2.) The natural man, that is, the wise man of the world, a man, that will receive nothing by faith nor own his need of supernatural assistance,—such a man receives not the things of the Spirit of God. Revelation is not with him a principle of knowledge; he looks upon it as extravagance. It is no way to wisdom among the famous masters of the world. And for that reason he can have no knowledge of things revealed, because they are only made known by the revelation of the Spirit, which is a principle of knowledge he will not admit. By the natural man we must understand the unregenerate man, however sagacious, learned, or free from sensual indulgences; for he is placed in opposition to the spiritual man; and the pride of carnal reasoning is as much opposed to spirituality, as the most grovelling sensuality. No man who is not "born of the Spirit," John 3. 5, can receive in faith and love the spiritual mysteries of redemption by the cross of Christ.

2. But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged, or discerned of no man, ver. 15. By the illuminating and sanctifying work of the Spirit of God upon the mind, a spiritual capacity is produced, by which he delights in the divine excellency of heavenly things. The sanctified mind discerns the real beauties of holiness; but by the refinement of its faculties, the power of discerning and judging about common and natural things is not lost. The spiritual man may judge of all things, natural and supernatural, human and divine, the deductions of reason, and the discoveries of revelation. But he himself is judged or discerned of no man. His life is hid with Christ in God, Col. 3. 3. The carnal man is a stranger to the principles, and pleasures, and actings of the divine life. And he that is spiritual, receives the Divine revelations, and founds his faith and religion upon them; he can judge both common things and things divine; he can discern what is, and what is not the doctrine of the gospel, and of salvation.

He does not lose the power of reasoning, nor renounce the principles of it, by founding his faith and religion on revelation. But no man who is not spiritual, not founding his faith on Divine revelation, can discern or judge whether what he speaks be true or Divine, or not. In short, he who founds all his knowledge upon principles of science, and the mere light of reason, never can be a proper judge of the truth or falsehood of what is received by revelation.

For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him, namely, the spiritual man? Who can enter so far into the mind of God, as to instruct him who has the Spirit of God, and is under his inspiration? He only is the person to whom God immediately communicates the knowledge of his will. How little have any known of the mind of God by natural power! But, adds the apostle, we have the mind of Christ, and the mind of Christ is the mind of God. The apostles were empowered by his Spirit to make known his mind. And in the holy scriptures, the mind of Christ, and the mind of God in Christ, are fully revealed to us. Observe, it is the great privilege of christians, that they have the mind of Christ revealed to them by his Spirit. On this great Teacher we must simply depend, while we seek to know the things which are freely given of God to his people, and to obtain the assurance that we belong to their number. If we are delivered from the spirit of this world, we shall have more and more regard to the words of sacred scripture. And whoever teaches, and whatever expressions are used, the natural man will oppose, despise, or abuse the things of the Spirit of God; they will remain foolishness to him, because he wants spiritual discernment. But he who is born of God, will become spiritual, and thus be capable of discerning the excellences and value of Divine truth; he will experience its sanctifying effects in his heart, and bring forth correspondent fruits in his life.

10, 11 The scriptural style employs the verb "to search," not only in its sense of acquiring knowledge by a successive process, but to signify the intuitive, profound, and accurate knowledge proper to the Deity only.—*J.P. Smith.*

14. Attention to the apostle's own discourse shows that by the natural man is meant one, who, though the doctrines of the gospel are ever so clearly published and proposed to his examination, as they then were to jews and greeks; and though having all the learning of the

greeks, and all the advantages of the jewish rabbis, who made great profession of religion, and whose business it was to study the holy scriptures; yet having only natural principles of reason, with its utmost improvement by external means, to guide and influence him in his inquiries into Divine revelation, he can neither know its doctrines might in their estimable glories, nor be suitably affected by them.—*Guyse.*

15 He that is spiritual seems to answer to those who are effectually called, and to whom Christ crucified is the wisdom of God, and the power of God, in opposition to those to whom he is a stumbling-block and foolishness, chap. 1. 23, 24, and so he that is spiritual is here the regenerate man. It is not to be understood as relating only to ministers.—*Guyse.*

CHAPTER III.

The apostle reproves the Corinthians for their carnality and contentions about ministers, ver. 1—4. Shows that the true servants of Christ can do nothing effectually without him; that they preach him as the only foundation, and that every one should take heed to what he builds on this foundation, 5—15. That the churches of Christ ought to be kept pure, as they are the temple of the Holy Ghost, 16, 17. That it becomes them to be humble in their opinion of themselves, 18—20. And that they should not glory in men; because it is through Christ that ministers and all things else are theirs, 21—23.

Ver. 1—4. The apostle had not fully instructed the Corinthians in the deeper points of doctrine. They had been endued with supernatural gifts and knowledge, and though he looked upon them as, for the most part, sincere converts, yet they were so far from maturity of judgment and experience, and so prone to carnal passions, that he considered it necessary to feed them with milk, as the nurse does the infant, and not with strong meat. The simplest truths of the gospel, respecting man's sinfulness and God's mercy, repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, stated in the plainest language, suited them better than those deeper mysteries, which afforded the teacher fuller opportunity of showing his abilities. These the apostle did not dwell upon, because they would feed the carnal passions of the Corinthians, instead of their faith and love. Men may have much doctrinal knowledge, yet be mere beginners in the life of faith and experience. It is but too common for persons of very moderate knowledge and

understanding to have a great measure of self-conceit. It is the duty of a faithful minister of Christ to consult the capacities of his hearers, and teach them as they can bear. And yet babes grow up to men; and babes in Christ should grow in stature, and become men in Christ. Their advances in knowledge should be in proportion to their means and opportunities. Christians are utterly to blame, who do not endeavour to grow in grace and knowledge. He blames their contention and discord about their ministers. Contentions and quarrels about religion are sad evidences of remaining carnality. True religion makes men peaceable, not contentious. Factions act on human principles, not on principles of true religion; they are guided by their own pride and passions, and not by christianity; Do ye not walk as men? It is to be lamented, that many who should walk as christians, do indeed live and act too much like other men. They had mutual emulations and quarrels, and factions, on account of their ministers; while one said, I am of Paul; another, I am of Apollos.

4. These were proofs that fleshly interests and affections too much swayed them. The principles and affections of the natural man were more prominent in their conduct, than the humble, meek, loving and peaceable dispositions which spring from regeneration. It is evident that by carnal, is not here meant the prevalence of sensual appetites, but of evil tempers and passions. Thus many professors and preachers also, show themselves to be yet carnal, by their vain-glorious emulations, eagerness for controversy, and disposition to despise and speak evil of others. This is of sin, not of grace, of the natural, not the spiritual man. The carnal mind of worldly men is prominent, and prevails in them.

Ver. 5-10. The apostle reminds the Corinthians, that the ministers about whom they contended, were mere instruments used by God. We should not put ministers into the place of God. All the gifts and powers that even apostles discovered and exerted in the work of the ministry were from God. They manifested their mission and doctrine to be Divine. Paul had planted, and Apollos had watered. God makes use of various instruments, and fits them to their several uses

and intentions. Paul had been sent to inclose and plant the Lord's vineyard at Corinth, Apollos to water that vineyard. But God alone had made the plants grow and become fruitful. The success of the ministry must be derived from the Divine blessing. The best qualified and most faithful ministers have a just sense of their own insufficiency, and desire God should have all the glory of their success. Paul and Apollos are nothing in their own account, but God is all in all. Observe the unanimity of Christ's ministers; He that planteth and he that watereth are one, ver. 8; employed by one Master, intrusted with the same revelation, busied in one work, and engaged in one design; in harmony with one another, however they may be set in opposition to each other by party-makers. They have their different gifts from one and the same Spirit, for the very same purposes; and they are heartily to carry on the same design. Planters and waterers are but fellow-labourers in the same work. All the faithful ministers of Christ are one in the great business and intention of their ministry. They may have differences of sentiment in lesser things; they may have their debates and contests; but they heartily concur in the great design of honouring God and saving souls. All such may expect a glorious recompense. Their business is one, but some may mind it more than others; their end and design are one, but some may pursue it more closely than others: their Master also is one, and yet this good and gracious Master may make a difference in the rewards he gives, according to the different services they do. Every one's own work shall have its own reward. Those who work hardest shall fare best. Those who are most faithful shall have the greatest reward; and a glorious work it is in which all faithful ministers are employed.

They are labourers with God, co-workers, fellow-labourers, ver. 9, not in the same order and degree, but as instruments in his hand. They work together with God, in promoting the purposes of his glory, and the salvation of precious souls; and he who knows their work, will take care they do not labour in vain. Men may neglect and vilify one minister, while they cry up another, yet have no reason for either;

they may condemn when they should commend, and applaud what they should neglect and avoid; but the judgment of God is according to truth. Faithful ministers, when ill used by men, should encourage themselves in God. They are under his eye, employed in his husbandry and building; and he will carefully look over them; it is the Divine blessing on his own husbandry alone can make it yield fruit. You are God's husbandry and building. He had employed the former metaphor before, and now he uses that of a building.

Paul calls himself a wise master-builder, ver. 10. Persons may be in an office for which they are not qualified, such was not Paul's case. Yet though he gives himself such a character, it is not to gratify his own pride, but to magnify Divine grace. He was a wise master-builder, but the grace of God made him such. Spiritual pride is abominable, it is using the greatest favours of God, to feed our own vanity, and make idols of ourselves. But, to notice the favours of God to promote our gratitude to him, and to speak of them to his honour, is a proper expression of the duty and regard we owe him. Ministers should not be proud of their gifts or graces; but the better qualified they are for their work, and the more success they have in it, the more thankful should they be to God for his distinguishing goodness. It was Paul that laid the foundation of a church among them. Faithful ministers may and ought to have concern for their own reputation. Their usefulness depends much upon it. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereon. This is a proper caution; there may be very indifferent building on a good foundation. It is easy to err here; and great care should be used. Nothing must be laid upon it, but what the foundation will bear, and what is of a piece with it. Ministers of Christ should take great care that they do not build their own fancies or false reasonings on the foundation of Divine revelation. What they preach should be the plain doctrine of their Master, or what is perfectly agreeable with it, and He only is to be considered as the object of adoring gratitude and love. All gospel labourers are equal in themselves as to the success; the blessing God gives thereto, puts difference between them, as to their suc-

cess, and this is to be sought by humility and prayer.

And let us not dare to join a merely human or a carnal life with a Divine faith, the corruption of sin with the profession of christianity.—(94.)

Ver. 11—15. The apostle proceeds to speak of unskilful and unfaithful labourers, and begins by declaring what foundation he had laid for all his labours among them—even Jesus Christ, the chief Corner-stone, Eph. 2. 20. Upon this foundation all faithful ministers of Christ build. Upon this Rock all christians found their hopes. Those who build hopes of heaven on any other foundation, build upon sand. Other foundation can no man lay, besides what is laid—even Jesus Christ.

In his person and offices he is a firm, abiding, and immovable Rock of ages, every way sufficient to bear all the weight that God himself or the sinner can lay upon him—neither is there salvation in any other, Acts 4. 12.—(82.)

The doctrine of our Saviour, and his mediation, and atonement, and intercession, is the principal doctrine of christianity. Leave out this, and there is no foundation for our hopes as sinners. It is in Christ only that God is reconciling a sinful world to himself, 2 Cor. v. 19. But of those who rest on the foundation, and embrace the doctrine of Christ's being the Mediator between God and man, there are two sorts.

1. Some build on this foundation, gold, silver, and precious stones, ver. 12. receive and propagate the pure truths of the gospel; hold nothing but the truth as it is in Jesus, and preach nothing else. This is building well upon a good foundation, when ministers not only depend upon Christ as the great Prophet of the church, and take him for their Guide and infallible Teacher, but receive and spread the doctrines he taught, without any corrupt mixture, without adding or diminishing. They preach the doctrine of salvation by faith in Christ, instruct believers from the word of God in the truths of the gospel, show them their obligations and duties; and teach them to evidence their faith by spiritual worship and holy obedience.

2. Others build wood, hay, and stubble, on this foundation. Though they adhere to the foundation, they depart from

the mind of Christ in many particulars; substitute their own fancies and inventions in the room of his doctrines and institutions, and build on the good foundation what will not abide the test, when the day of trial comes. So dan-

ous is it to teach false doctrines even in connexion with fundamental truths. As wood, hay, and stubble will not bear the trial by fire, but must be consumed in it, there is a time coming when discovery will be made of what men have built on this foundation. Every man's work shall be laid open to view. Some may build wood and stubble on the good foundation, and know not what they have been doing. Now, we may be mistaken in ourselves and others; but there is a day coming that will cure all our mistakes, and show us ourselves, and show our actions in the true light, without covering or disguise. For the day shall declare it, that is, every man's work, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work, of what sort it is, ver. 13. The day shall declare and make it manifest, the last day, the great day of trial. The expression has a plain allusion to the refiner's art, in which the fire separates and distinguishes the dross from the gold and silver: as also silver, and gold, and precious stones, that will endure the fire, from wood, and hay, and stubble, that will be consumed in it.

In that day, 1. Some men's works will abide the trial. It will appear, they not only rested on the foundation themselves, but that they built well upon it. Foundation-truths, and those which had connexion with them, were taught together. And such a builder will have praise and honour in that day, and eternal recompense after it. Those who spread true and pure religion in all the branches of it, and whose work will abide in the great day, shall receive a reward. And how great! how much exceeding their deserts! 2. There are others, whose works shall be burnt, ver. 15, whose corrupt opinions and doctrines, or vain inventions and usages in the worship of God, shall be discovered, disowned, and rejected, in that day. If he has built upon the right foundation, wood, and hay, and stubble, he will suffer loss. This part of his work will be lost, it will turn no way to his advantage, though he himself may be saved. This may help to enlarge our charity. He

shall be saved, yet so as by fire, saved out of the fire. He shall be snatched out of that flame, which will yet consume his work. God will have no mercy on their works, though he may pluck them as brands out of the burning. On this passage of scripture the papists found their doctrine of purgatory, which is certainly hay and stubble; a doctrine never originally fetched from scripture, but invented in barbarous ages, to feed avarice and ambition, at the cost of those who would rather part with their money than their lusts, thinking thus to obtain the salvation of their souls. But it can have no countenance from this text, (1.) Because this is plainly meant of a figurative fire, not of a real one; for what real fire can consume religious rites or doctrines? (2.) Because this fire is to try men's works, of what sort they are; but purgatory-fire is not for trial, not to bring men's actions to the test, but to punish them. (3.) Because this fire is to try every man's works, those of Paul and Apollos, as well as others.

Such a momentous doctrine cannot rest on a figurative passage of scripture. The doctrine of purgatory was unknown to the early ages of christianity, and evidently was borrowed from the Grecian philosophy. The Old Testament certainly knows of no such doctrine, but asserts that there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave, Ecc. 9. 10, and that where the tree falls it shall lie. Our Saviour gave no countenance to it, when he said to one who had been guilty of more than venial sins, To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise, Luke 23. 43. The apostle had no dread of such punishment when he declared that he be absent from the body, is to be present with the Lord, 2 Cor. 5. 6, 8. Such a doctrine dishonours the perfect sacrifice of Christ, whose blood cleanseth from all sin. It keeps the weak christian in bondage, through fear of death, from which Christ came to deliver us. It emboldens men to continue in sin, from the prospect of final absolution, and has afforded pretences to an avaricious priesthood to drain the treasures of the multitude.—(87.)

Let then all men recollect that their work must be tried by the fire, and anticipate the decisions which the day of judgment will pronounce concerning their present sentiments and occupations. How

irreparable will be the loss from spending our time of service to no purpose, or in any manner hurtful to ourselves or others. Let us consider the tendency of our undertakings, compare them with God's word, and judge ourselves, that we be not judged of the Lord.

9—13. Though the whole of this passage is obviously allegorical, yet it is understood literally by the church of Rome, which has erected upon it her doctrine of the fire of purgatory. How contrary this doctrine is to every rule of right interpretation, is too plain to require any exposition — *T. H. Horne*

15. The apostle employed a well-known proverbial expression, referring solely to a narrow escape from extreme danger — *Doddridge*. He appears here to speak of different classes of individuals professing the Christian faith. The season of persecution purifies the faith of true believers, and proves their principles. Their characters shall be further proved in the day of judgment. — See *Macknight*, *Lothian*, and others

Ver. 16, 17. Here the apostle resumes the argument and exhortation. Ye are God's building, from ver. 9; Know ye not that ye are the temple of God; and the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile, corrupt, and destroy the temple of God, him shall God destroy: the same word is in the original, in both clauses; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are. From other parts of the epistle, it appears, the false teachers among the Corinthians taught licentious doctrines. Such teaching was not to be reckoned among hay and stubble, that would be consumed, while the person who laid them on the foundation escaped the burning. It tended to corrupt, to pollute, and destroy the building erected for God, and consecrated to him, which therefore should be kept pure and holy. Those who spread loose principles, that pollute the church of God, and render it unholy, bring destruction on themselves. It may be understood of the church collectively, or of every single believer. Christian churches are temples of God. He dwells among them by his Holy Spirit. Every christian is a living temple of the living God. God dwelt in the Jewish temple, by the glorious cloud that was the token of his presence with that people. Christ by his Spirit dwells in all true believers. The temple was set apart to the immediate service of God. So all christians are separate from common uses, and set apart for God and his service. If we are temples of God, we must do nothing that

shall alienate ourselves from him, or corrupt ourselves, and thereby unfit ourselves for his use; and we must hearken to no doctrine that would seduce us to any such practices. Christians are holy by profession, and should be pure and clean, both in heart and conversation. We should heartily abhor, and carefully avoid, what will defile or profane God's temple. He is deceived who deems himself the temple of the Holy Ghost, yet is unconcerned about personal holiness, or the peace and purity of the church.

Ver. 18—20. We are in great danger of deceiving ourselves, when we have a high opinion of human wisdom and arts; plain and pure christianity may be despised by those who try to suit their doctrines to the corrupt taste of their hearers. But he who would be wise, must be sensible of his own ignorance, and lament it; he must distrust his own understanding, and not lean on it. To have a high opinion of our own wisdom is but to flatter ourselves; and self-flattery is the next step to self-deceit. The way to true wisdom is, to sink our opinion of ourselves to a due level, and to be willing to be taught of God. The wisdom that worldly men esteem, is foolishness with God. And there is no measure by which to compare finite wisdom and infinite. Much more is the wisdom of man foolishness with God, when set in competition with his. How justly does he despise, how easily can he baffle and confound it! God has a perfect knowledge of the deepest thoughts of the wisest men, their most secret counsels and purposes; nothing is hidden from him. Heb. 4. 13. The thoughts of the wisest men in the world have vanity, weakness, and folly in them; and before God their wisest and best thoughts are very vanity. All this should teach us to be humble, diffident of ourselves, and to defer to the wisdom of God; make us thankful for his revelations, and willing to be taught of God, so as not to be led away, by pretences to human wisdom and skill, from the simplicity of Christ, and regard to his heavenly doctrine.

Ver. 21—23. Then let none glory in men, as if some learned or excellent leader could be an honour to them, and they might value themselves on their relation to him. Let no man forget that their ministers are men, or pay that

deference to them which is due only to God; have them in undue esteem and admiration, and servilely follow their conduct or dictates. Mankind are very apt to oppose the design of the mercies of God. Faithful ministers are a great blessing to any people; yet the folly and weakness of people may do much mischief by what is in itself a blessing. They may fall into factions, glory in their leaders, and be carried by them they know not whither. The only way to avoid this evil is, to have a due sense of the weakness of human understanding, and entire deference to the wisdom of God speaking in his word. All faithful ministers are serving one Lord, and pursuing one purpose. They were appointed of Christ, for the common benefit of the church. Paul, and Apollos, and Cephas, are all yours. One is not to be set up against another, but all are to be valued and used for our spiritual benefit.

Observe the spiritual riches of a true believer: All is yours, even ministers and ordinances. Nay, the world itself is yours. Not that saints are proprietors of the world, but they have as much of it as Infinite Wisdom sees fit for them, and they have it with the Divine blessing. Life is yours, that you may have season and opportunity to prepare for the life of heaven; and death is yours, that you may go to the possession of it. It is the kind messenger to take you from sin and sorrow, and to guide you to your Father's house. Things present are yours, for your support on the road; things to come are yours, to enrich and regale you for ever at your journey's end. If we belong to Christ, and are true to him, all good belongs to us, and is sure to us. All is ours, time and eternity, earth and heaven, life and death. We shall want no good thing, Ps. 84. 11. But it must be remembered that believers are Christ's, the subjects of his kingdom, his property, his chosen and redeemed people, the members of his body, his beloved, the trophies of his victory, and jewels of his crown. He is Lord over us, we must own his dominion, cheerfully submit to his command, and yield to his pleasure, if we would have all things minister to our advantage. All things are ours, upon our being Christ's. Out of him we have no just title or claim to any thing that is good. Those who would be safe for

time, and happy to eternity, must be Christ's. And Christ is God's. He is the Christ of God; anointed of God, and commissioned by him, to bear the office of a Mediator, and to act therein for the purposes of his glory. All things are the believer's, that Christ might have honour in his great undertaking, and God in all might have the glory. God in Christ, reconciling a sinful world to himself, and shedding abroad the riches of his grace on a reconciled world, is the sum and substance of the gospel.

CHAPTER IV.

The apostle states the true character, and the esteem that ought to be shown to gospel-ministers, who must stand or fall, not by man's, but by God's own judgment concerning them, ver. 1-6. Cautions the Corinthians against priding themselves in what they had received, and against despising him and his fellow-servants on account of their ignominious treatment from the world, 7-13. Claims their regards to himself, as their spiritual father in Christ, 14-16. And shows his great concern for them, in that he had sent Timothy to them, and intended himself to come and rectify disorders among them, 17-21.

Ver. 1-6. Apostles themselves were not to be over-valued, for they were no more than servants of Christ, though they were servants of the highest rank, that had the care of his household, that were to provide food for the rest, and appoint and direct their work. The most exact integrity and faithfulness is required in such. Even apostles were but servants of Christ, and dispensers of truths hidden from the world in ages and generations past. They had no authority but to spread the Christian faith. But apostles were not to be undervalued; for though they were ministers, they were ministers of Christ. Though but stewards, they were stewards of Divine mysteries. They were intrusted with the truths of the gospel, that they might apply them with suitable encouragements and warnings, as every one's case required. They had a great trust, and for that reason had an honourable office.

It is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful, ver. 2, trustworthy. Ministers of Christ must make it their endeavour to approve themselves trustworthy. When they have the testimony

of a good conscience and the approbation of their Master, they may slight the opinions and censures of their fellow-servants. But with me, saith the apostle, it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment, ver. 3. Paul had a just concern for his own reputation, but he that would chiefly aim to please men, would not approve himself a faithful servant of Christ, Gal. 1. 10. He that would be faithful to Christ, must despise the censures of men for his sake. They may think meanly or hardly of him, while he does his duty; but it is not by their judgment he must stand or fall. The best of men are too apt to judge rashly, and hardly, and unjustly; but God's judgment is always according to truth. It is a comfort that men are not to be our final judges. Nay, we are not thus to judge ourselves; Yea, I judge not myself. For though I know nothing by myself, cannot charge myself with unfaithfulness, yet am I not thereby justified, this will not clear me of the charge; but he that judgeth me, is the Lord. It is his judgment that must determine me. I am as he shall find and judge me to be. It is not judging well of ourselves, justifying ourselves, that will prove us safe and happy. Nothing will do this, but the acceptance and approbation of our sovereign Judge, 2 Cor. 10. 18. Though we know more of ourselves than any others can do of us; yet our own judgment is not to be depended upon in respect of our faithfulness, any more than our own works in respect of our justification.

The apostle, knowing that many were disposed to judge unfavourably of him, through the artifices of those who misled them, from hence cautions the Corinthians against forward and severe judging others—not to judge such matters before the time, ver. 5. It is judging out of season. He is to be understood of judging persons' future state, or the secret springs and principles of their actions. To judge in these cases, and give decisive sentence, is to challenge God's prerogative. There is day 'ing, that will bring men's secret sins into open day, and discover the secrets of their hearts; The day shall declare it. The Judge will bring these things to light. The Lord Jesus Christ has the knowledge of the coun-

sels of the heart, else he could not make them manifest. This is a Divine prerogative, Jer. 17. 10; and our Saviour claims it himself, Rev. 2. 23. Then every slandered believer will be justified, and every faithful servant approved and rewarded. Though none of God's servants can deserve any thing from him, though there is much that is blamable even in their best services, yet shall their fidelity be commended and crowned by him; and should they be condemned by their fellow-servants, he will show them in their true light. Christians may well be patient under unjust censures, when they know that such a day as this is coming, especially when they have their consciences testifying to their integrity. But how fearful should they be of loading any with reproaches now, whom their Judge will hereafter commend!

The apostle used his own name, and that of Apollos, in this discourse, in a figure, and he had done it for their sakes, ver. 6. He chose rather to mention his own name, and the name of a faithful fellow-labourer, than the names of any heads of factions among them, that he might avoid what would provoke. The apostle would by this means inculcate that they might learn not to be puffed up for one against another, ver. 6, above what he had been writing. The word of God is the best rule by which to judge concerning men. Pride commonly is at the bottom of quarrels. Self-conceit contributes to produce immoderate esteem of our teachers, as well as ourselves. Commendation of our own taste and judgment commonly goes along with our unreasonable applause, and always with a factious adherence to one teacher in opposition to others, who may be equally faithful and well-qualified. We shall not be puffed up for one against another, if we remember that they all are instruments employed by God in his husbandry and building, and endowed by him with their various talents and qualifications.

4. "I am not conscious to myself of any guilt."

Ver. 7—13. The apostle cautions against pride and self-conceit, by this consideration, that all distinctions are owing to God; Who maketh thee to differ? ver. 7. And what hast thou that thou didst not receive? What had the ministers at the head of these fac-

tions to glory in, when all their peculiar gifts were from God? We have no reason to be proud of attainments, enjoyments, or performances; all that we have, or are, or do, that is good, is owing to the free and rich grace of God. Boasting is for ever excluded. Surely upon the principles of the gospel, a sinner snatched from destruction by sovereign grace alone, must be most absurd and inconsistent if he could be proud of the free gifts of God.

When the apostle had left Corinth, and the people had more flattering and eloquent teachers, they were satisfied, ver. 8. Ye have reigned as kings, says the apostle, that is, in your own conceit; and I wish ye had as much of the true glory of a christian church as you arrogate to yourselves. I should then share the honour; I should reign with you; be valued and regarded as a minister of Christ. Those do not know themselves best, who have the highest opinion of themselves. Pride is a great obstacle to our improvement.

St. Paul sets forth his own circumstances, and those of the other apostles, saying, I think it hath pleased God to set forth as the apostles last, as it were appointed to death. For we are made a spectacle to the world, and to angels, and to men. They were exposed to great hardships. They carried their lives in their hands, ver. 9. Allusion is made to the bloody spectacles in the Roman amphitheatres; where men were compelled to cut one another to pieces, to divert the people; where the victor did not escape with his life, though he should destroy his adversary, but was only reserved for another combat, and must be destroyed or cut in pieces at last. So that such wretched criminals, (generally condemned persons were thus exposed,) might very properly be called persons devoted or appointed to death. They are said to be set forth last, because those who combated in the after-part of the day, were most exposed, being obliged to fight naked. So that, as Seneca says, this was perfect butchery. The meaning is, that the apostles were exposed to continual danger of death, in the faithful discharge of their office. But the apostles were set forth to manifest the power of Divine grace, to confirm the truth of their mission and doctrine, and to propagate religion in the world. These

were ends worthy of God; noble views, fit to animate them in the combat.

The apostle proceeds in animated terms, ver. 9; Angels and men witness our persecutions, sufferings, and patience. They all see that we suffer for our fidelity to Christ, how great and imminent are our dangers, and how bravely we encounter them; how sharp our sufferings, and how patiently we endure them, by the power of Divine grace and our christian principles. The faithful ministers and disciples of Christ should contentedly undergo any thing for his sake and honour. The consideration that so many eyes are upon them, when struggling with difficulties or conflicting with temptations, should animate them to constancy and patience. We are fools for Christ's sake; such in common account, and we are well content to be so accounted, ver. 10. Faithful ministers can bear being despised, so that the wisdom of God and the power of his grace be thereby displayed. But ye are wise in Christ. Ye are in reputation for your eloquence and human wisdom, which among many make you pass for wise men in Christ. We are weak, but ye are strong. We are suffering for Christ's sake, as being weak plainly signifies, 2 Cor. 12. 10, when ye are in easy and flourishing circumstances. All christians are not alike exposed. Some suffer greater hardships than others, who are yet engaged in the same warfare. We pass in the world for persons of but mean endowments, but ye look upon yourselves as men, as those of a much more advanced growth and confirmed strength. They are not always the greatest proficient in christianity, who think thus of themselves, or pass for such with others. It is but too easy and common for self-love to commit such a mistake. He enters into some particulars of their sufferings, ver. 11, 12. Poor circumstances indeed, for the ministers of our Saviour's kingdom to have no home, and to be destitute of food and raiment! But how glorious the charity and devotion, that carried them through all these hardships! How ardently did they love God, how vehemently did they thirst for the salvation of souls! They thought they had a rich amends for all the outward good they wanted, if they might serve Christ, and save souls.

Yes, though they were made the filth

of the world, and the off-scouring of all things, ver. 13. They were treated as men not fit to live. It is thought that allusion is here made to a common custom of many heathen nations, to offer men in sacrifice, in a time of pestilence, or other like grievous calamity, with expressions of abhorrence or execration. These were ordinarily the vilest of men; persons of the lowest rank and worst character. Thus, in the first ages, christians were counted the source of all public calamities, and were sacrificed to the people's rage, if not to appease their angry deities. The apostles suffered in their persons and characters as the very worst and vilest men; & the most proper to make such a sacrifice. Or else as the very dirt of the world, that was to be swept away: nay, as the off-scouring of all things, the dross of all things. How much did the apostles resemble their Master! They suffered for him, and they suffered after his example. Thus poor and despised was he in his life and ministry. And every one who would be faithful in Christ Jesus, must prepare for poverty and contempt. Those may be very dear to God, and honourable in his esteem, whom men may think unworthy to live, and use and scorn as the very dirt and refuse of the world. We have here the apostles' behaviour, and the return they made for this ill treatment. They returned blessings for reproaches, and entreaties and kind exhortations for the rudest slanders and defamation; and were patient under the sharpest persecutions. Whatever the disciples of Christ suffer from men, they must follow the example, and fulfil the will and precepts of their Lord. They must be content, with him and for him, to be despised and abused.

How happy is a man when he is once thoroughly satisfied that it is much better to be rejected and trampled under foot as St. Paul was, than to have the esteem and favour of the world. Cast off by the world as vile, yet precious to God, gathered up with his own hand, placed upon his throne, and preserved in his own bosom.—(94.)

12. The direct mention of the apostle's working with his own hands refers to Corinth, Acts 18. 3, but in his address to the elders of the Ephesian church, Acts 20. 34, he appeals to their personal knowledge that his own hands had ministered to his necessities: consequently he had wrought at his trade in that city also, an undesigned co-

incidence corresponding with the account here given.—*Paley.*

Ver. 14—16. Here the apostle affectionately claims their regard to him as their father. He tells the Corinthians that what he wrote was not for their reproach, but admonition, ver. 14. In reproving for sin, we should regard the reputation, as well as the reformation of the sinner. We should distinguish between them and their sins. Reproofs that expose, commonly do but exasperate; when those that kindly and affectionately warn, are likely to reform. When the affections of a father mingle with the admonitions of a minister, it is to be hoped that they will at once melt and mend; but to expose men to open shame, is the way to render them shameless.

They were converted to Christ by his ministry. He laid the foundation of a church among them. He was their spiritual father. He brought them from idolatry to the faith of the gospel, and the worship of the true and living God. He being made the instrument of their new birth, claimed the relation of a father to them, and felt the compassion of a father toward them. There commonly is, and always ought to be, endeared affection between faithful ministers and their children in Christ Jesus. He urges; Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me, ver. 16. Thus he explains, ch. 11. 1. Be ye followers of me, as I also am of Christ. Though he spoke with authority as a parent, he would rather beseech them in love. Be my disciples, as far as I manifest myself a faithful minister and disciple of Christ, but no further. I would not have you my disciples, but his. Ministers should so live, that their people may take a pattern from them. They should guide them by their lives as well as their lips; go before them in the way to heaven, not content themselves with pointing it out. And as ministers are to set an example, others must imitate it. They should follow them, as far as they follow Christ in faith and practice: and it is criminal to despise or grieve such faithful friends, who feel the affection of a parent.

Ver. 17—21. The apostle taught the same things, in every church, and lived after the same manner in all times and places. The truth of Christ is one and invariable. What one apostle taught,

every one taught, at all times and in all places. Christians may mistake and differ in their apprehensions, but Christ and christian truth are the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, Heb. 13. 8. Timothy was his spiritual child, as well as themselves. Spiritual brotherhood should engage affection as well as what is common and natural. The children of one father should have one heart. He adds, He is faithful in the Lord; trustworthy, as one that feared the Lord. He would recall to remembrance the apostle's doctrines, and the plans pursued in the churches which he had planted. It is a great commendation of any minister, that he is faithful in the Lord, faithful to his soul, to his light, to his trust from God; this must go far in procuring regard to his message.

Some teachers and professors at Corinth were so puffed up with their fancied superiority, as to imagine that the apostle would not attempt to come among them. But he assured them that he fully intended to come, if the Lord enabled him, and then would make trial of their power to support themselves in opposition to his authority, ver. 18, 19.

The gospel gives account of the heavenly state, declaring that except a man is born again, and has a better righteousness than his own, even that of Christ, he shall not see, nor enter into the kingdom of heaven. Now the gospel is not in word, though it lies in the word of God, the scriptures of truth, and treats of the essential Word of God, the Lord Jesus Christ, and cannot be preached without words; yet it is not to be preached in the words which man's wisdom teaches, nor does the efficacy depend upon the words of the preacher, or mere moral suasion. Whenever it is effectual, it comes not in word only, but also in power, 1 Thess. 1. 5, by the powerful operation of the Spirit attending the preaching of the gospel, to the quickening of dead sinners, the delivering persons from the slavery of sin and Satan, the transforming and renewing of them, both inwardly and outwardly, and to the comforting, enlivening, strengthening and establishing of the saints, which cannot be ascribed to the persuasive language of men, but to the power of God. This is more apparent when it is observed how despicable the instruments are in the eyes of men, and how great is the opposition to it from

the enmity of man's heart, by the men of the world, and by Satan and his powers.—(27.)

It is a good way in general to judge a preacher's doctrine, by seeing whether the effects of it upon men's hearts be truly Divine. That is most likely to come from God, which in its own nature is most fit, and in the event is found, to produce most likeness to God; to change men's hearts, and mend their manners. The apostle asks, would they choose that he should come among them with the rod of correction, denouncing spiritual censures, and inflicting miraculous judgments? Or, would they that he should come to them in the spirit of tender love and meekness, to encourage, commend, and comfort them? This would depend on their conduct in respect to the abuses he was about to specify; for, if they were not remedied, he must exercise some salutary severity on the offenders. It is a happy temper in a minister, to have the spirit of love and meekness predominant, and yet to maintain his just authority. Spiritual censures and scriptural warnings are to be respected and feared, though they may not now perhaps be followed by temporal judgments; and those who are so self-confident as to despise them are most likely to experience their dreadful effects.

May God give his ministers more of this truly apostolic spirit, more of those overflowings of holy love, tempering and attempted by that ardent zeal against sin, and that firm resolution in the discharge of duty, which shone so brightly in the apostle, and in which he justly recommends himself to the imitation of his children and brethren.—(80.)

17. Timothy is here spoken of as having been sent to Corinth, but in ch. 16. 10, 11, he is spoken of as not having yet been there. From Acts 19. 21, 22, we find that he was sent from Ephesus to Macedonia first, which would delay his arrival in Achaia.—*Paley.*

CHAPTER V.

The apostle blames the Corinthian church for their connivance at an incestuous person, and orders them to excommunicate him, ver. 1-6. Exhorts them to do away this, and every other offence, 7, 8; and directs their behaviour towards church-members, in distinction from the men of this world who are guilty of scandalous crimes, 9-13.

Ver. 1-6. The apostle here notices

a most flagrant abuse, connived at by the Corinthians. A professed christian was guilty of incest with his mother-in-law, probably his father was yet alive. See 2 Cor. 7. 12. This was a crime which even the licentious gentiles detested, yet it was generally known, and, though so scandalous a wickedness, was committed and allowed to pass without censure, while they were conceited about their gifts and superior attainments. A party spirit and a false notion of christian liberty, seem to have secured him from censure. Had they been rightly disposed, they would have mourned over this enormity, and would have separated such a character from their company.

Though the apostle was absent, yet being present in spirit, having the whole affair clearly before his mind, he was fully determined as to the case. He therefore charged them in the name of Christ, that when they were met together as a church, they would consider him as present among them, able to enforce the sentence with the power of the Lord Jesus Christ, and expel the incestuous person from their communion, that he might be considered a subject of Satan's kingdom. Yet they were not to proceed in hatred, or for his ruin, but in hope that it would be the means of bringing him to repentance, and for the mortification of his fleshly lusts, so that his soul might be saved.

Grievous indeed is it that crimes should sometimes be committed by professors of the gospel, of which even heathens would be ashamed. Spiritual pride, and false doctrines, tend to introduce and to extend such scandals. Woe be to those by whom such offences come. The great end of church censures is the good of those who fall under them; their spiritual and eternal good, ver. 5. But they have been so abused by human passions, or rendered of no avail by connexions and influence, that a more complete revival of pure religion seems necessary before they are likely to produce their due effect.

How dreadful the effects of sin! The devil necessarily reigns where Christ does not. A man is in his kingdom and under his power when not in Christ.—(94.)

The bad example of one of influence is very mischievous; spreads far and wide. It did so, probably, in this very case, see 2 Cor. 12. 21. They could not

be ignorant of this. A little leaven will quickly spread fermentation through a great lump. Such corrupt principles and examples, if connived at, would diffuse their baleful influence through the whole church.

Ver. 7, 8. Here the apostle exhorts to purity by purging out the old leaven. It implies, that christians should clear themselves from all impurity of heart and life. And they should especially avoid the sins to which themselves once were most addicted, and the reigning vices of the places and people where they live. They were also to purge themselves from malice and wickedness; all ill-will and mischievous subtilty. This is leaven that sours the mind to a great degree. Christians should be particularly careful to keep free from this. How hateful should every thing be to a christian, that looks like malice and mischief!

The advice is thus enforced; For Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us. This is the great doctrine of the gospel. We should die with our Saviour to sin; be planted into the likeness of his death, by mortifying sin; and into the likeness of his resurrection, by rising again to newness of life, and that both internal and external. We must have new hearts, and lead new lives. The whole life of a christian must be a feast of unleavened bread. His common conversation and his religious performances must be holy. He must purge out the old leaven, and keep the feast with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. He must be without guile in his conduct toward God and man. And the more there is of sincerity in our own profession, the less shall we censure that of others. So far is the sacrifice of Christ our Passover for us, from rendering this personal and public sanctification unnecessary, that it furnishes the most powerful reasons and effectual motives for it. Without holiness we can neither live by faith in him, nor join in his ordinances with comfort and profit.

Thus the sacrifice of our Redeemer is the strongest argument with a gracious heart for purity and sincerity. How sincere a regard did He show to our welfare, in dying for us! And how terrible a proof was his death, of the detestable nature of sin, and God's displeasure against it!

Heinous evil, that could not be expiated but with the blood of the Son of God!

Ver. 9—13. Yet this does not forbid all intercourse whatever with evil characters. Such a prohibition would be to bid believers shut themselves up from the world. But the apostle advises them to shun scandalous professors. He says, If any man who was called a brother, any one professing christianity, and being a member of a christian church, were a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, they should not keep company with him. Christians are to avoid the familiar conversation of all who disgrace the christian name. Such are not christian brethren. They are only fit companions for their brethren in iniquity, and to such company they should be left. While christians are minding their duty, and doing their proper business, God can and will preserve them from contagion. Men of the world carry a warning against the infection of their bad example, and put believers upon their guard. They are apt to have a horror at their wicked practices. But the dread of sin wears off by familiar converse with wicked professors. Our own safety and preservation are causes for this difference. Though the church has nothing to do with those without, it must endeavour to keep clear of guilt and reproach from those within, while such as are strangers or enemies to the doctrines of grace, must be left to the judgments of God.

Perhaps here is reference to the woman in this case, who may have been a heathen, ver. 12. The apostle lastly applies the argument to the case before him: therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person; cast him out of your fellowship, and avoid his conversation.

Alas that there are abundance called christians whose converse is more dangerous than that of heathens! But those will receive the greater condemnation, who, being within the outward church, live contrary to the spirit of it. And let us remember that every christian carries within himself a temple, from whence he ought to labour continually to cast out that man of sin who dwells there and corrupts his heart.—(94.)

9. From this verse some have inferred that St. Paul had already written to the Corinthians an

epistle which is no longer extant, while others consider that the apostle refers to the epistle he is writing. After a full review of the subject, *T. H. Horne* considers that only the two epistles now extant were written.

CHAPTER VI.

The apostle cautions the Corinthians against going to law one with another, especially in heathen courts, ver. 1—8. Specifies several gross sins which they were cleansed from, but which, lived and died in, exclude from the kingdom of God, 9—11. Repeats his caution against uncleanness, as it is a defilement and an abuse of their bodies, which are the members of Christ, and temples of the Holy Ghost, and are purchased for God, that, with the whole man, they may glorify him, 12—20.

Ver. 1—8. Here the apostle reproves the Corinthians for going to law with each other before heathen judges; and therein blames all vexatious law-suits. He directs them to determine all controversies with one another by the arbitration and advice of their fellow-christians. Observe, christians should not contend with one another, for they are brethren. This, duly attended to, would prevent many law-suits, and put an end to many quarrels and litigations. They brought the matter before the heathen magistrates; brought the controversy before unbelievers, and did not settle it among those who were christians and saints, at least in profession. Christians should not dare to do any thing that tends to the reproach of their christian name and profession. Here is also an intimation that they went to law for matters of little moment. In matters of great damage to ourselves or families, we may use lawful means to right ourselves, but christians should be of a forgiving temper. And it is more for their ease and honour to suffer small injuries and inconveniences, than to seem to be contentious.

By judging the world and angels, ver. 2, 3, some think, is understood their being assessors to Christ in the judgment, Matt. 19. 28; Jude 14, 15; 1 Thess. 3. 13. They themselves are to be judged; that they may then approve and applaud the righteous judgment of Christ. In no other sense can they be judges. They are not partners in the Lord's commission, but they will see his proceeding against the wicked world, and approve it. Shall christians sit with

the sovereign Judge at the last day, whilst he passes judgment on sinful men and evil angels, and are they not worthy to judge the trifles about which brethren contend before heathen magistrates? Cannot they make up these mutual differences? Must you, about the affairs of this life, set them to judge who are of no esteem in the church? So some read, and perhaps most properly, ver. 4. Must they be called in to judge, in your controversies, of whom you entertain a low opinion? Is not this shameful? ver. 5. Some who read it as our translators, make it an irony. The meanest of your own members are able surely to determine these disputes. Refer the matters in variance, to any, rather than go to law about them before heathen judges. They are trifles, and may easily be decided, if you first conquer your own spirits, and bring them into a christian temper.

Bear and forbear, and the men of meanest skill among you may end your quarrels. I speak it to your shame, ver. 5. It is a shame that little quarrels should grow to such a head among christians, that they cannot be determined by arbitration of the brethren. Christians should never engage in law-suits, till all other remedies are tried in vain. Prudent christians should prevent, if possible, all disputes, and not go to courts of judicature to decide them. Also by suffering wrong, rather than taking this method to right themselves; It is utterly a fault among you, to go to law in this matter: it is a fault of one side always, to go to law, except where the matter is indeed dubious, and there is a friendly agreement of both parties to refer it to the law, to decide it. And this is referring it, rather than contending about it, which is what the apostle here condemns. Should you not rather take wrong? A christian should rather put up with an injury than tease himself, and provoke others, by a litigious contest. The peace of his own mind, and the calm of his neighbourhood, often are worth more than victory in such a contest; especially when the quarrel must be decided by the enemies to religion. But the apostle tells them, they were so far from bearing injuries, that they actually did wrong, and defrauded, and that their brethren. The ties of mutual love ought to be stronger between them than others. And love worketh no ill

to his neighbour, Rom. 13. 10. Law-suits could scarcely take place among brethren unless there were faults among them. Much deliberation, counsel, and prayer should be used, before a man enter upon such a business. How shameful then that professors of the gospel not only refuse to bear and forgive injuries, but they do wrong and defraud, and that even their brethren!

Ver. 9—11. The apostle warns the Corinthians against many heinous evils, to which they had been formerly addicted. There is much energy in these inquiries, when we consider that they were addressed to a people, who were puffed up with an imagination of their superiority to others in wisdom and knowledge. He puts it to them as a plain truth, of which they could not be ignorant, that such sinners shall not inherit the kingdom of God; shall not be owned as true members of his church on earth, nor admitted as glorious members of the church in heaven. All unrighteousness is sin; and all reigning sin, nay every actual sin, committed deliberately, and not repented of, shuts out of the kingdom of he. He are specified several sorts of sins against the first and second commandments, against the seventh, against the eighth, against the ninth, and against the tenth, as those who commit these are likely to break all the rest. Those who knew any thing of religion, must know that heaven could never be intended for these. Those who do the devil's work, never can receive God's wages, at least no other than death, the just wages of sin, Rom. 6. 23. They are warned against deceiving themselves: Be not deceived. Those who cannot but know the forementioned truth, are too apt not to attend to it. Men are very much inclined to flatter themselves, that they may live in sin, and yet die in Christ; may lead the life of the devil's children, and yet go to heaven with the children of God. It is very much the concern of mankind, that they do not cheat themselves in the matters of their souls. We cannot hope to sow to the flesh, and yet reap everlasting life.

He puts them in mind what a change the gospel and grace of God had made in them. Such were some of you; such notorious sinners as he had been reckon-

ing up. The greek word is, "such things," were some of you, very monsters rather than men. How glorious a change does grace make! It changes the vilest of men into saints and the children of God. Such were some of you, but you are not what you were. Ye are washed, ye are sanctified, ye are justified in the name of Christ, and by the Spirit of our God. The blood of Christ, and the washing of regeneration, can purge away all guilt and defilement. Ye are sanctified, ye are justified. Sanctification is mentioned before justification; and yet the name of Christ, by which we are justified, is placed before the Spirit of God, by whom we are sanctified. Our justification is owing to the suffering and merit of Christ; our sanctification, to the operation of the Spirit: but both go together. None are cleansed from the guilt of sin, and reconciled to God through Christ, but those who are also sanctified by his Spirit. All who are made righteous in the sight of God, are made holy by the grace of God.

As though the apostle said, Ye are now washed from your sins, and justified in God's sight through faith in the name of the only Lord and Saviour, in virtue of his atoning blood and meritorious righteousness, Rev. 1. 5; Acts 13. 38, 39, and ye are sanctified by the renewing, purifying, and quickening influence of the Spirit of our gracious God, 2 Thess. 2. 13, even your God and mine, who, for this very purpose, has shed the Holy Ghost upon you abundantly, through Jesus Christ our Saviour, Tit. 3. 5, 6, and who signified all these benefits, and sealed the promises of them, in your christian baptism.—(32)

Ver. 12—20. The twelfth and former part of the thirteenth verse, seem to relate to the early dispute among christians, about the distinction of meats, and to be prefatory to the caution that follows. The connexion seems plain enough, if we attend to Acts 15. Some among the Corinthians seem to have imagined that they were as much at liberty in the point of fornication as of meats, especially because it was not a sin condemned by the laws of their country. They were ready to say, even in that case, All things are lawful for me. This pernicious conceit St. Paul opposes. He tells them that many things, even lawful in

themselves, were not expedient; and christians should consider what was fit for them to do, considering their profession, character, and hopes. Their philosophizing disposition, and their abuses of christian liberty, indicate them to have been speculative gentile converts, who introduced a specious system of antinomianism. Their false principles seem to have made way for their connivance at the conduct of the person before referred to. There is a liberty wherewith Christ has made us free, in which we must stand fast. But surely a christian would never carry this liberty so far, as to put himself into the power of any bodily appetite. Though all meats were supposed lawful, he would not become a glutton or a drunkard. And much less would he abuse the maxim of lawful liberty, to countenance a sin, which, though it might be allowed by the corinthian laws, was utterly unlawful for christians. He would not abuse this maxim about eating and drinking, to encourage any intemperance, or indulge a carnal appetite; if in danger of being subjected to appetite, he will abstain. God shall destroy both it and them; at least, as to their mutual relation. There is a time coming, when the need and use of food shall be abolished. The expectation we have of being without bodily appetites in a future life, is a very good argument against being under their power in the present life. This seems to be the sense of the apostle's argument; and this passage is plainly connected with his caution against fornication, ver. 13.

Here is the first argument he uses against this sin, for which the heathen inhabitants of this city were infamous, and the converts to christianity retained too lax an opinion concerning it. The body is for the Lord; is to be an instrument of righteousness to holiness, therefore is never to be made an instrument of uncleanness. And the Lord is for the body, that is, Christ is to be Lord of the body, to have property in it, and dominion over it, having assumed a body, and been made to partake of our nature, that he might be Head of his church, and Head over all things, Heb. 2. 5—18. We must take care that we do not use what belongs to Christ, as if it were our own, and much less to his dishonour.

A second argument against this sin is, the honour intended to be put on our bodies. God hath both raised up our Lord, and will raise us up by his power, ver. 14, by the power of him who shall change our vile body, and make it like to his glorious body, by that power, whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself, Phil. 3, 21. It is an honour to the body, that Jesus Christ was raised from the dead; and it will be an honour to our bodies, that they will be raised. The hopes of a resurrection to glory should restrain christians from dishonouring their bodies by fleshly lusts.

A third argument is, the honour already put on them; Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? ver. 15. If the soul be united to Christ by faith, the whole man is become a member of his mystical body. The body is in union with Christ as well as the soul. It is good to know in what honourable relations we stand, that we may endeavour to adorn them. Nothing can stand in greater opposition to the honourable relations and alliances of a christian man, than this sin. He is joined to the Lord in union with Christ, and made partaker by faith of his Spirit. One spirit lives and breathes and moves in the Head and members. Christ and his faithful disciples are one, John 17, 21, 22. Now shall one in so close a union with Christ as to be one spirit with him, be united to a harlot? Can a greater indignity be offered to him or ourselves? Can any thing be more inconsistent with the profession or relation? It is no wonder therefore the apostle should say, Flee fornication, ver. 18, avoid it, keep out of the reach of all temptations to it, of exciting objects. Direct the eyes and mind to other things and thoughts. Other vices may be conquered in fight, this only by flight.

A fourth argument is, that it is a sin against our own bodies, ver. 18. Every sin, that is, every other sin, every external act of sin besides, is not so much an abuse of the body as of somewhat else, as wine by the drunkard, food by the glutton. Nor do they give the power of the body to another person. And beyond any other vice, vast multitudes are cut off by this in its various forms and consequences. We should not make our present vile bodies more vile by sinning against them.

On the whole there is no other sin by which equal hurt and detriment is received, considering not only its nature, but how much it has prevailed. Its effects fall not only directly upon the body, but often more immediately upon the mind.—(80)

The fifth argument against this sin is, that the bodies of christians are the temples of the Holy Ghost which is in them, and which they have of God, ver. 19. He that is joined to Christ, is yielded up unto him thereby, and set apart for his use, and is possessed, occupied, and inhabited, by his Holy Spirit. A temple is a place where God dwells, and sacred to his use. Real christians are temples of the Holy Ghost, who dwells in them, as the gift of the Father through the Son, to consecrate them to God, and prepare them for his glory. Must not the Holy Spirit therefore be God? But the inference is plain, that hence we are not our own. We are yielded up to God, and possessed by and for God; nay, and this in virtue of a purchase made of us. Ye are bought with a price, ver. 20; our bodies were made for God, they were purchased for him, and he inhabits and occupies them by his Spirit. They have been redeemed from inherited condemnation and hopeless slavery, by the atoning sacrifice of Christ. The temple of the Holy Ghost must be kept holy. Our bodies must be kept fit for his use and residence.

Sixth, the apostle argues from the obligation we are under to glorify God, both with our body and spirit, which are his, ver. 20. He made both, he bought both, both belong to him, and should be used and employed for him; they therefore should not be defiled, or alienated from him. They must be kept as vessels fitted for our Master's use. We must look upon our whole selves as holy to the Lord, and sacred to his use and service. We are to honour him with our bodies and spirits, which are his; and therefore, surely, must abstain, not only from outward acts, but from the adultery of the heart, as our Lord calls it, Matt. 5, 28. Body and spirit are to be kept clean, that God may be honoured by both. Therefore flee fornication, nay, and every sin. We are not proprietors of ourselves, nor have power over ourselves, and therefore should devote both body and soul to his glory, in every service

to which God calls them, making no use of them, which is not consistent with entire devotedness to Christ, that they may at length share his resurrection, and be made like to his glorious body.

It is well to fortify the mind by every argument against dangerous temptations, but the noblest motives should animate the believer's soul. Being united to Christ as one spirit, and bought with a price of inestimable value, he should consider himself as wholly the Lord's, by the most endearing and indissoluble ties.

Let us, as often as we are tempted to alienate ourselves from the service of God, reflect upon the price with which we are bought. How great, how important a price, which we should never think of but with secret shame, as well as admiration and love! O Lord, hast thou paid such a ransom for me, and shall I act as if I thought even this not enough? as if thou hadst acquired only a partial and imperfect right to me, that I might divide myself between thee and strangers, between thee and thy enemies? O may we be entirely thine! and make it our business, to the latest day and hour of our lives, to glorify God with our bodies, and with our spirits which are his.—(80.)

CHAPTER VII.

The apostle proceeds to answer several questions that had been sent to him; and, beginning with what had been proposed about marriage, he shows, that though in some cases it might be better not to enter into that state; yet, it is God's ordinance to be a remedy against evil, ver. 1—9. That married christians should not seek to part with their unbelieving consorts, 10—16. That persons, in any civil station, should ordinarily be satisfied to abide in that in which they were first called to the faith of Christ, 17—24. That it was most desirable, on account of the then perilous days, for single people to continue so, unless there were reasons to the contrary; and that persons of all stations ought to sit loose to this transitory world, 25—35. That great prudence should be used in the disposal of virgins, 36—38. And widows should be very careful how they marry again, especially that it be only in the Lord, 39, 40.

Ver. 1—9. It appears that those among the Corinthians who regarded the apostle's authority, had written desiring

his decision of some questions. Here he proceeds to answer their inquiries, especially concerning marriage. Some seem to have adopted a sentiment of the pythagoreans, and to have thought that marriage was inconsistent with what they considered christian purity. Others, like the pharisees, taught that it was sinful to live unmarried, but laid down superstitious rules respecting marriage.

The apostle tells them in general, that it was good, in that juncture of time at least, to abstain from marriage altogether. By reason of the distresses of the christian church, it would be a convenience for christians to keep themselves single. The expression, ver. 2, also may intimate that christians must avoid all occasions of sin, and flee all fleshly lusts, and incentives to them. Yet, he informs them that marriage, and the comforts and satisfactions of that state, are prescribed by Divine wisdom. Nor ought married persons to imagine that it is right for them to live long apart. The remedies God has provided against sinful inclinations, are certainly the best.

The apostle did not state it as an injunction to marry. The gifts of God, both in nature and grace, are variously distributed. Paul could wish all men were as himself, but all men cannot receive such a saying, save those to whom it is given, Matt. 19. 11. He speaks of the unmarried and widows, ver. 9, 10. There are many conveniences, especially at that juncture, in a single state, to render it preferable to a married one, ver. 8, which plainly implies Paul was at that time unmarried. But marriage, with all inconveniences, is a duty to some, ver. 9. Though none may break the law of God, yet that perfect rule leaves men at liberty to serve him in the way most suited to their capacity and circumstances, of which others often are very incompetent judges. In counselling others we should use caution, lest we cast them into circumstances of temptation, urging them to what is contrary to duty, and dissuading from what is best for them. All must determine for themselves, seeking counsel from God how they ought to act.

1. *Paley* observes that this epistle being written by St. Paul, in answer to one from the Corinthians, is a proof of its authenticity.

Ver. 10—16. The apostle directs as

to the christians living with heathen relatives in a married state. Moses' law permitted divorce; and Ezra 10. 3, might raise a scruple in many minds, whether converts to christianity were not bound to put away or desert their husbands or wives, who continued infidels. Concerning this matter, the apostle here tells them, that marriage, by Christ's command, is for life; therefore those who are married must not think of separation. This I command, says the apostle; yet not I, but the Lord. Whatever he commanded, was dictated by the Holy Spirit, and enjoined by his authority. But his meaning is, that the Lord himself had forbidden such separations, Matt. 5. 32; 19. 9; Mark 10. 11; Luke 16. 18. Man and wife must not separate for any other cause than what Christ allows. Divorce at that time was very common among both jews and gentiles, on very frivolous pretexts.

He brings the general advice home to the case of such as had an unbelieving husband or wife, ver. 12. But to the rest speak I, not the Lord; the Lord had not so expressly spoken to this case as to the former of divorce. It does not mean, that the apostle spake without authority from the Lord, or decided this case by his own wisdom. He closes this subject with a declaration to the contrary, ver. 40. If the unbelieving relative desert the believer, in such a case a brother or sister was not bound to live unmarried, after all proper means for reconciliation have been tried. We have here the reasons of this advice:

1. Because the relation or state itself is sanctified to the believer. Marriage is a Divine institution; it is a compact for life, by God's appointment, ver. 14. If one of the relatives were become holy, the married state could not defile them, and render them displeasing to God, though the other were a heathen. Else were your children unclean, but now are they holy. They would not be of the holy seed, as the jews are called, Isa. 6. 13, but common and unclean, in the same sense as heathens in general were styled in the apostle's vision, Acts 10. 28. This way of speaking is according to the manner of the jews; among whom a child of parents yet heathens, was said to be out of holiness; and a child by parents made proselytes, is said to be within the holy inclosure. Thus

christians are called commonly saints; such they are by profession, separated to be a peculiar people of God, and as such distinguished from the world.

2. Another reason is, that God hath called christians to peace, ver. 15. We are bound, as much as in us lies, to live peaceably with all men, Rom. 12. 18; and therefore surely to promote the peace and comfort of our nearest relatives, though they should be infidels. It should especially be the labour and study of those who are married, to make each other as easy and happy as possible.

3. A third reason is, that it is possible for the believing relative to be the means of the other's salvation, ver. 16. It is the plain duty of those in so near a relation, to seek the salvation of those to whom they are related. Do not separate. The married state calls for the most close and endeared affection. Should a christian desert a husband or wife, when an opportunity offers to give the greatest proof of love? Stay, and labour heartily for the conversion of thy relative. Endeavour to save a soul. Who knows but this may be the event? It is not impossible. Mere possibility of success should move us to use diligent endeavours for saving the souls of our relations. In every state and relation the Lord hath called us to peace; and every thing should be done to promote harmony, as far as truth and holiness will permit.

12. The apostle here refers to Christ personally, and to his ministry upon earth. The influence of the Holy Spirit is neither mentioned nor alluded to in these words. The distinction is, that in the one case there existed a direct command of Christ, in the other there did not.

Ver. 17-24. Our states and circumstances in this world, are distributions of Divine providence. And, as the Lord hath called every one, so let him walk. Whatever a man's circumstances and condition were, when converted to christianity, let him abide therein, and suit his conversation to it. The rules of christianity reach every condition. And in every state a man may live so as to be a credit to it. It is the duty of every christian to suit himself to his condition, to be content with his lot, and conduct himself in his rank and place as becomes a christian. The apostle adds, that this was a general rule, to be observed at all times and in all places.

He specifies particular cases. It mat-

ters not whether a man be a jew or gentile. It is practical religion, sincere obedience to the commands of God, on which the gospel lays stress. Outward observances without inward piety, are as nothing. Therefore let every man abide in the calling, the state, wherein he was called. Many were in a state of slavery, the property of others. Now, says the apostle, art thou called, being a servant? Care not for it. It is not inconsistent with thy duty, profession, or hopes, as a christian. Liberty is the more eligible state. But men's outward condition does not hinder nor further their acceptance with God. For he that is called, being a servant, though he be not discharged from his master's service, is freed from the dominion and vassalage of sin, ver. 22. Though he be not enslaved to Christ, he is bound to yield himself up wholly to his pleasure and service; and yet that service is perfect freedom. Our comfort and happiness depend on what we are to Christ, not what we are in the world. The goodness of our outward condition does not discharge us from the duties of christianity, nor the badness of it debar us from christian privileges. He who is a slave, may yet be a christian freeman. Not that he may quit the service of his master, or neglect taking all proper measures to please him. But the servants of Christ should be at the absolute command of no other master beside himself, should serve no man, further than is consistent with duty to him.

The apostle here does not enter on the question of the lawfulness of slavery, which then would have involved him in the discussion of political rights. But it is evident that the tendency of his argument is unfavourable to a state of slavery. He went as far as he could in the existing state of the church. And, observe, it does not appear that obstacles were thrown in the way of the religious instruction of slaves. This refinement of cruelty seems to have been unknown to heathen masters, for no complaints on this head appear in the New Testament.—(87.)

Let every man, wherein he is called, abide therein with God, ver. 24. No man should make his faith or religion an argument to break through any natural or civil obligations. He should quietly and contentedly abide in the

condition in which he is; and this he may well do, when he may abide therein with God. The special presence and favour of God are not limited to any outward condition or performance. He may enjoy it, who is circumcised, and so may he who is uncircumcised. He who is bound may have it as well as he who is free.

19. *Lightfoot* shows that there were some jews, even priests, who were not circumcised, and adds, Now jews, tell me, whether circumcision is any thing, especially whether it be of so much account, either to justification or sanctification, as you esteem it, when an israelite might be a true israelite, and a priest a true priest, without circumcision.

Ver. 25—35. The apostle acted faithfully, and therefore his direction was to be regarded as a rule of Christ. Faithfulness in the ministry is owing to the grace and mercy of Christ. The determination he gives was that considering the present distress, a state of celibacy was preferable. This is good, says he, for the present distress. Christians, at the first planting of their religion, were grievously persecuted. The married state would bring more care with it, would make persecution more terrible, and render them less able to bear it. Christians, in regulating their conduct, should not barely consider what is lawful in itself, but what may be expedient for them. Notwithstanding the apostle is careful not to condemn marriage. Though he says, If in a single state, do not hastily change conditions, yet he adds, If married, it is thy duty to continue in the relation, and to do the duties of it. Though such, if called to suffer persecution, would find peculiar difficulties. Duty must be done, and God trusted with events. How opposite in this the papist casuists are to the apostle Paul! They forbid many to marry, and entangle them with vows of celibacy, whether they can bear the yoke or not.

The apostle enforces these advices. The time is short, ver. 29. We have but little time for possessing and enjoying worldly things; they will soon be gone. Therefore do not set your hearts on worldly enjoyments. Do not be overwhelmed with worldly cares and troubles. Why should your hearts be much set on what you must quickly resign? He exhorts all christians to holy indifference toward the world. 1. As to

relations; that is, they must not set their hearts too much on the comforts of the state. Those who were their comfort now, may prove their greatest cross. And soon may the flower of all comforts be cut down. 2. As to afflictions; we must not indulge ourselves in the sorrow of the world; but keep up holy joy in God, in the midst of all our troubles; so that even in sorrow the heart may be joyful. And in heaven at last, all tears shall be wiped from our eyes. 3. As to worldly enjoyments: Here is not their rest, nor are these things their portion; therefore their hearts should not be set on them. 4. As to worldly traffic and employment; Those that prosper in trade, and increase in wealth, should hold these possessions as though they held them not. It is but setting their hearts on that which is not, Prov. 23. 5, to do otherwise. Buying and possessing hinder from minding the better part, Luke 14. 18, 19. 5. As to all worldly concerns, ver. 31. Worldly good is abused when it is not used for the purposes for which it is given, to honour God, and do good to men; when, instead of being as soil to the wheels of our obedience, it is made as fuel to lust: when, instead of being a servant, it is made our master, our idol, and has that room in our affections, which should be reserved for God. And there is great danger of abusing it in all these respects, if our hearts are much set upon it. We must keep the world out of our hearts, that we may not abuse it when we have it in our hands. The fashion of this world passeth away, ver. 31, the habit, figure, appearance of the world, passeth away. All is show; nothing solid. It is transient, and will be quickly gone. How proper and powerful an argument is this to enforce the former advice! How irrational to be affected with the images, the fading and transient images of a dream! Surely man walketh in a vain show, Ps. 39. 6, amidst the faint and vanishing appearances of things. And should he be deeply affected, or grievously afflicted with such a scene? To be careless is a fault; wise concern about worldly interests is a duty; but to be full of care, to have an anxious and perplexing care, is sin, ver. 32.

By this maxim the apostle solves the case whether it were advisable to marry.

Celibacy is not a state of greater holiness than marriage; but the unmarried would be able to make religion more their business at that juncture, because they would have less distraction from worldly cares. And it is to be the constant care of those in that relation, to please each other. At that season, therefore, the apostle advises, that those who were single, should abstain from marriage, if they were under no necessity to change conditions. And where the same reason is plain at other times, the rule is as plain, and as fit to be observed to determine persons for marriage. That condition of life should be chosen by the christian, in which it is most likely he shall have the best helps, and the least hindrances, in the service of God, and the affairs of his own salvation.

All care which disquiets the mind, and distracts it in the worship of God, is evil. God must be attended upon without distraction, ver. 35. The whole mind should be engaged when God is worshipped. But how is this possible, when the mind is swallowed up with the cares of this life? It is the wisdom of a christian, so to order his outward affairs, that he may attend upon the Lord with a mind at leisure and disengaged. That condition of life is best for every man, which is best for his soul, and keeps him most clear of the cares and snares of the world.

Let us attentively reflect upon the advantages and snares of our own condition in life; that we may improve the one, and escape as far as is possible all injury from the other. Let those who are single employ their leisure for God, and let those who are married make the relation into which Providence has led them, as agreeable as they can. And whatever cares press upon the mind, let a due proportion of time still be secured for the things of the Lord.—(80.)

34. The apostle seems to declare that single persons of either sex, generally have opportunities for devotion beyond those that are married, even in the most peaceful times of the church; that a diversity of humours, both in men and women, makes it difficult for them to please each other so thoroughly as is necessary, in order to make a married life delightful. So that it intimates a counsel to single people to value and improve their advantages, and to married people to watch against those things that would ensnare them, and injure their mutual peace and comfort.—*Doddridge*.

Ver. 36—38. In this passage, the

apostle is commonly supposed to give advice about the disposal of children in marriage, upon the principle of his former determination. In this view, the general meaning is plain. It was in that age, and those parts of the world, and especially among the jews, reckoned a disgrace for a woman to remain unmarried, past a certain number of years. The apostle says, he that giveth her in marriage, does well; but he that keeps her single, if she can be easy and innocent in such a state, does what is better; that is, more convenient for her in the present state of things. Children should seek and follow the directions of their parents as to their marriage. And parents should consult their children's inclinations, both as to marriage in general, and as to the person in particular, and not reckon they have uncontrollable power to do with them, and dictate to them, as they please. Also it is our duty not only to consider what is lawful, but in many cases, at least, what is fit to be done, before we do it.

36. Several views of this passage have been taken, but that which is given in the comment seems the least involved in difficulty. *Bloomfield* observes that the disgrace which female celibacy implied, then extended in some degree to the father.

Ver. 39, 40. The whole is here closed with advice to widows. The marriage contract is for life; death only can annul the bond. But it is certain, from this passage, that second marriages are not unlawful. The apostle asserts, the wife has such a liberty, when her husband is dead, only with the limitation that she marry in the Lord. In our choice of relations, and change of conditions, we should always have regard to God. Marriages are only likely to have God's blessing, when they are made in the Lord; when persons are guided by the fear of God, and the laws of God, and act in dependence on the providence of God, in the choice of a partner for life; when they can look up to God, and sincerely seek his direction, and humbly hope for his blessing upon their conduct. But she is happier, says the apostle, if she continue a widow, in my judgment; and I think I have the Spirit of God, ver. 40. At this juncture, at least, if not ordinarily, it will be much more for the peace and quiet of such, and give them less hinderance in the

service of God, to continue unmarried. And this, he tells them, was by inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Change of condition in marriage is so important a matter, that it ought only to be made upon due deliberation, after careful consideration of circumstances, and upon very probable grounds at least, that it will be a change to advantage in our spiritual concerns.

Whatever our state or service may be, we should remember that the time is short. Our temporal comforts or trials will soon end; our season of preparation or of usefulness will shortly expire. Let us then sit loose to earthly satisfactions, bear up under sorrows, be sober and considerate in prosperity, be cheerful in adversity. Let us deem heaven our sole inheritance, and use the things of this world as not abusing them, seeing the fashion of this vain world is passing away like a shadow. Thus we may be helped forward in our pilgrimage by them; kept out of the way of temptation; and enabled to serve God and our generation to better advantage, as we pass through this world to heaven. •

40. *Lothian* says, The word rendered "I think" does not always imply uncertainty, but frequently denotes conviction or knowledge. Thus our Lord uses it Luke 17. 9, John 5. 39, where evidently no doubt is implied. The apostle had before declared he had the mind of Christ, and the Spirit of God, ch. 2. 16. See *Macknight*, who quotes 1 Cor. 4. 9: 8. 2; Heb. 1. 1; Mark 10. 32; Luke 8. 18; 1 Cor. 11. 16; 1 Cor. 14. 32. Many passages in ancient Greek writers show the word is used to express what is certain. *Macknight* adds, From these examples it is evidently not implied that the apostle was in any doubt whether he was inspired in giving this judgment. It is only a soft way of expressing his certain knowledge of his own inspiration. He therefore renders it, "I am certain that even I have the Spirit of God." *Townsend* observes, The misconception has arisen from the double meaning of the english word 'think,' which commonly expresses a degree of uncertainty in the mind of the speaker, in reference to any fact in question. Whereas the word, in the original, signifies 'I am of opinion,' or 'I profess,' implying thereby a very high degree of confidence and self-persuasion. This language therefore, so far from impeaching the inspiration of the apostle, is even stronger than if it were only a simple affirmation of the fact. It is an asseveration upon the credit of his own personal knowledge and assurance.

CHAPTER VIII.

The apostle, in answer to another proposed case about meats offered to idols, shows the danger of persons having a high

conceit of their own knowledge, ver. 1-3. The vanity of idols, and the unity of the Godhead, in opposition to a multiplicity of gods, 4-6. And the mischief of offending weak brethren, by eating things offered to idols, even supposing that, in the general view, it might be lawful, 7-13.

Ver. 1-3. The apostle speaks here of things that had been offered to idols; a case that frequently occurred in that age, when the church of Christ was among the heathen. Knowledge, or high conceit of it, is very likely to puff up the mind. This tends to no good to ourselves, but in many instances is much to the hurt of others. But true love, and tender regard to our brethren, will put us on consulting their interest, and acting for their edification. There is no evidence of ignorance more common than conceit of knowledge. He that knows most, best understands his own ignorance, and the imperfection of human knowledge. Much may be known, when nothing is known to good purpose; when neither we ourselves nor others are the better for our knowledge. And those who think they know any thing, and grow vain hereupon, are least likely to make a good use of their knowledge.

Those who love God, and for his sake love their brethren, are approved of God: and how much better is it to be approved of God than to have a vain opinion of ourselves! Satan injures some men, as effectually by tempting them to be proud of mental powers, as other men by alluring to sensuality. That knowledge which puffs up the possessor and renders him confident is as dangerous as self-righteous pride, though what he knows may be right. Without holy affections and Divine love, which cannot exist where pride rules, all human knowledge is worthless; but sanctified affections are evidences of the Lord's merciful acceptance, and are important steps to a good understanding in the way of godliness.

1. It was customary among the heathens, to make feasts on their sacrifices; and not only to eat themselves, but to invite their friends to partake with them. These were usually kept in the temple, where the sacrifice was offered, ver. 10; and if any thing were left when the feast ended, it was usual to carry away a portion to their friends; what remained after all belonging to the priest, who sometimes sold it in the markets. See ch. 10. 25. Also feasts, as Athenæus informs us, were always accounted among the heathen sacred and religious things, so that

they were wont to sacrifice before all their feasts; and it was accounted a very profane thing among them, to eat at their private tables any meat, whereof they had not first sacrificed on such occasions.—S. Brown.

Ver. 4-6. Every creature of God is good, if it be received with thanksgiving, 1 Tim. 4. 4. It is not in the power of the vanities of the heathens to change its nature. And there is no other God but one. Others may be called gods; but they are falsely thus called. The heathens had gods of higher and lower degree; gods many, and lords many; so called, but not being such in truth. All their divinities and mediators were imaginary. Christians are better informed; they well know there is but one God, the Fountain of being, the Author of all things, Maker, Preserver, and Governor of the whole world, of whom, and for whom, are all things. Not one God to govern one part of mankind, or one rank and order of men, and another to govern another. One God made all, and therefore has power over all. All things are of him, and we, and all things else, are for him. He is called the Father here, not to make a distinction from the other persons of the sacred Trinity, but in contradistinction to all creatures. We are not to suppose the Lord Jesus is here spoken of, as if his original nature were inferior to, or distinct from the Father, any more than in those texts which directly speak of his mediatorial person and office. The one God, even the Father, signifies the Godhead as the sole object of all religious worship; and the Lord Jesus Christ denotes the person of Emmanuel, God manifest in the flesh, One with the Father, and with us, the appointed Mediator, and Lord of all, through whom we come to the Father, and through whom the Father communicates all blessings to us, by the influences and operations of the Holy Spirit.

And there is to us but one Lord, one Mediator between God and men, even Jesus Christ. Not many mediators, as the heathen imagined, but one only, by whom all things were created, and do consist, and to whom all our hopes and happiness are owing: the only Person who comes between God and sinners, and mediates for men with God. All the lords of this sort among heathens are mere imaginary ones. It is the

great privilege of christians, that they know the true God, and true Mediator between God and man : the true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent, John 17. 3. While we refuse all worship to the many who are called gods and lords, and to saints and angels, remembering that there is one God the Father, of whom are all things, and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things ; let us examine whether we really do come to God by faith in the Divine Saviour ; whether we are spiritual worshippers of the living and true God, according to his word.

6. The object, " the all things," which is of the Father, as the supreme and primary Cause, this very same object, be it observed, is by the Lord Jesus Christ, as the immediate Cause. The same phrase is here used of the latter, which is twice by the same apostle employed with regard to the Divine Father. Rom. 11. 36 ; Heb. 2. 10.—*J. P. Smith.* One God is exclusive, not of the one Lord as though he were an inferior Deity, but only of the idols to which the one God is opposed.—*Guyse.*

Ver. 7—13. The apostle, having confirmed the opinion of some among the Corinthians, that idols were nothing, proceeds to show that their inference from this assumption was not just, namely—That therefore they might go into the idol temple, eat of the sacrifices, and feast there with their heathen neighbours. He does not so much insist upon the unlawfulness of the thing itself, as the mischief such freedom might do to weaker christians, persons who had not the same measure of knowledge. Weak christians may have but a confused knowledge of the great and plainest truths. Some who were turned from heathenism to christianity among the Corinthians were not thoroughly apprized of the vanity of idols ; and ate what was sacrificed to them, with an apprehension, that thereby it became unclean and made them so in a moral sense who should eat it ; every one not having a knowledge that the idol was nothing, and therefore that it could not render what was offered to it, in this sense, unclean. They had somehow an impression as if they were joining in an idolatrous sacrifice.

Eating one kind of food and abstaining from another, have nothing in them to recommend a person to God. But the apostle cautions them against abusing the liberty they had in this matter,

They must be cautious ; it might be a stumbling-block to the weak, ver. 9. If a man see thee, who hast knowledge, hast superior understanding to his, sit at meat, or feast, in an idol's temple, because an idol, thou sayest, is nothing, conceiting that thou hast full liberty to do so ; shall not one who is less thoroughly informed in this matter, and thinks an idol something, be emboldened to eat what was offered to the idol, not as common food, but as a sacrifice, and thereby be guilty of idolatry ? Such an occasion of falling they should be careful not to lay before their weak brethren, whatever liberty they themselves had.

That man has very little of the spirit of the Redeemer, who had rather his brother should perish, than himself be abridged, in any respect, of his liberty. He who hath the Spirit of Christ in him, will love those whom Christ loved, so as to die for them. He will study to promote their spiritual and eternal welfare, and shun every thing that would unnecessarily grieve them, much more every thing likely to occasion their stumbling, or falling into sin. The hurt done to them Christ takes as done to himself ; When ye sin so against the weak brethren, and wound their consciences, ye sin against Christ, ver. 12. Injuries done to christians, are injuries to Christ ; especially to weak christians ; and, most of all, involving them in guilt ; wounding their consciences, is wounding him. He has particular care of the lambs of his flock, Isa. 40. 11. Strong christians must avoid what will offend weak ones, or will lay a stumbling-block in their way. Shall we be void of compassion for those to whom Christ has shown so much ? Shall we sin against Christ, who suffered for us ?

He enforces all with his own example, ver. 13. Though it was necessary to eat, it was not necessary to eat flesh. He had such a value for the soul of his brother, that he would willingly forbear any particular food, which he might have lawfully eaten, and might like to eat, rather than occasion a weak brother to sin, by following his example, without being clear in his mind whether it were lawful or not. We should be very tender of doing any thing that may be an occasion of stumbling to others, though it may be innocent in itself. And if we must be so careful not to occasion other

men's sins, how careful should we be to avoid sin ourselves! If we must not endanger other men's souls, how much should we be concerned not to destroy our own! Let us beware of self-preference, ostentation, or self-indulgence, and despising those who are disquieted by needless scruples; who, though less comfortably, may serve God more conscientiously and humbly than we do. Let christians now beware of approaching the verge of evil, or the appearance of it, though many do this in public matters for which they plead perhaps as plausibly as the Corinthians. Men cannot thus sin against their brethren, and break the law of love without offending Christ, and endangering their own souls. They act contrary to the spirit of the apostle, who would have abstained from flesh to the end of life, rather than cause his weak brother to offend; and to the mind of Him who shed his precious blood, and poured out his dying prayers for his misguided murderers.

12. *J. P. Smith* notices the marked way in which disobedience against Christ is described as a terrible aggravation of an offence against a fellow-christian.

CHAPTER IX.

The apostle indicates his authority against those, who, among other pretences, made his not receiving maintenance an objection against it, ver. 1, 2. Asserts his right to maintenance from the reason of things, from the law of Moses, and the appointment of Christ, 3-14. Tells them that he thought it his glory to have waved this part of his christian liberty among them, 15-18. And he had done it, for the benefit of others, in several instances beside this, 19-23. And shows that he did all this, with the utmost care and diligence, in view of an incorruptible crown, and therein set them an example, 24-27.

Ver. 1, 2. Blessed Paul, in the work of his ministry, not only met with opposition from those without, but discouragement from those within. False brethren questioned his apostleship, and were labouring to injure his character. It is not new for a minister to meet with unkind returns for good-will to a people, and diligent and successful services among them. Some among the Corinthians questioned, if they did not disown, his apostolical character. To

their cavils he here answers, so as to set forth himself as a remarkable example of self-denial, for the good of others. He asserts his apostolical mission and character; Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? To be a witness of his resurrection was one great branch of the apostolical charge. He had seen the Lord; though not immediately after his resurrection, yet since his ascent. Am I not free? Have I not the same commission, and charge, and powers, with the other apostles? He offers the success of his ministry among them, as a proof of his apostleship; Are not ye my work in the Lord? Your conversion by my means is a confirmation from God of my mission. He justly upbraids the Corinthians with their disrespect, ver. 2. He had laboured so long, and with so much success, among them, that they, above all others, should own and honour his character. They were the last persons who ought to have expressed a doubt of his character, being themselves the seal and demonstration of it.

The conversion of souls and the establishment of churches, are the seal of preaching, and the work of man, but by the grace of Christ Jesus.—(94.)

Ver. 3-14. The apostle Paul had a right to marry as well as other apostles, and claim a maintenance for his wife, and his children, if he had any, from the churches, without labouring with his own hands to procure it. Perhaps Barnabas had a wife, as other apostles certainly had. Have we not power to forbear working? ver. 6. In short, the apostle here claims a maintenance from the churches, for him and his. 1. From the common practice and expectations of mankind. Those who give themselves to any way of business in the world, expect to live by it. Soldiers expect to be paid for their service. Husbandmen and shepherds expect a livelihood out of their labours. If they plant vineyards, and cultivate them, it is with expectation of fruit; if they feed a flock, it is with the expectation of being fed and clothed by it, ver. 7. It is very natural, and very reasonable, for ministers to expect a livelihood out of their labours. 2. He argues out of the Jewish law, ver. 8. Is this merely according to common usage only? No, it

is also consonant to the Divine law. God had therein ordered, that the ox should not be hindered from eating, while preparing the corn for man's use. But this law was not merely given out of concern for oxen, but to teach mankind that due encouragement should be given to those who are employed by us, or in labouring for our good. Assuredly those who lay themselves out to do our souls good, should have food provided for them. 3. He argues from common equity. The apostle had taught the way to eternal life, and laboured to put christian believers in possession of it. It was no great matter, surely, while giving themselves up to this work, to expect the support of their own temporal life. They had been instruments of conveying the greater spiritual blessings; had they no claim to a share in the carnal things necessary to subsist them? Those who enjoy spiritual benefits by the ministry of the word, should not grudge maintaining such as are employed in this work. Is this grateful or equitable? 4. He argues from the support afforded to others, ver. 7. You allow others their maintenance, and confess their claim just; who has so just a claim as I have from the church of Corinth? Who has given greater evidence of the apostolical mission? Who has laboured so much for your good, or done like service among you? Ministers should be valued and provided for according to their worth. Nevertheless he renounced his right, rather than by claiming it hinder his success, ver. 12. He denied himself, for fear of giving offence; yet claimed his right, lest his self-denial should prove prejudicial to the ministry. That man is likely to plead most effectually for the rights of others, who shows a generous disregard to his own. Justice, and not self-love, is the principle from which the apostle acted. 5. He argues from the Jewish establishment, ver. 13. If the Jewish priesthood was maintained out of the holy things then offered, shall not Christ's ministers be supported by their ministry? 6. He asserts it to be the institution of Christ; Even so hath the Lord ordained, that they who preach the gospel, should live of the gospel, ver. 14. It is the people's duty to maintain their minister, by Christ's appointment, though not a duty on every

minister to call for or accept it. He may waive his right, as Paul did, without doing wrong; but those transgress an appointment of Christ, who deny or withhold due support. How can any one minister to the edification of believers, if burdened with debts, surrounded by a family in want of necessaries, or driven to other employments for bread? Ministers have wants and feelings like other men, their spirits often are broken, and their hands weakened on these accounts, though they suffer in silence and submission.

5. The apostle means that he and all other apostles, consequently all ministers of the gospel, had a right to marry—that their wives were persons of the same faith, is implied by the word sister. Clement of Alexandria has particularly remarked that the apostles carried their wives about with them as christian sisters, that they might minister to the mistresses of families.—*F. H. Horne, A. Clarke.* This shows that St. Peter continued to live with his wife after he was an apostle, also that St. Peter had no right as an apostle, which were not common to St. Paul. A remark subversive of popery, if traced to its obvious consequences.—*Doddridge.*

Ver. 15—18. Though the apostle asserts his right, yet he does not claim his due; but denies himself for the sake of the Corinthians and the gospel. It was a pleasure to him to preach the gospel without making it burdensome, and he was resolved that among them he would not lose this satisfaction. It is the glory of a minister to prefer the success of his ministry to his interest, and to deny himself, that he may serve Christ and save souls. Those set apart to the office of the ministry, have it in charge to preach the gospel. Woe be to them, if they do not. From this none is excepted. But when he renounces this right for the sake of the gospel, he does more than his charge and office demands. It is a high attainment in religion, to renounce our own rights for the good of others. The apostle had been called to this work so remarkably that he could not decline the service, or execute it unfaithfully, without incurring heavy condemnation. But by preaching the gospel freely, he showed that he acted from principles of zeal and love, and thus enjoyed much comfort and assurance of hope in his soul. As we seek to further the good work of the gospel, and embrace all opportunities of making it known freely, even giving up our rights lest we should abuse our power in the gospel, we shall

be assured that we act from true principle, and shall receive a gracious reward. It is willing service only that receives a reward from God. It is not the barely doing a duty, but doing it heartily, willingly, and cheerfully, that God has promised to reward. Leave the heart out of our duties, and they are without the life and spirit of religion. Those must preach willingly, who would be accepted of God in this duty. They must make business a pleasure, and not esteem it a drudgery. But whether the duty of the office be done willingly, or with reluctance; whether the heart be in it, or averse from it; all in office have a trust and charge from God, for which they must be accountable. Christ's willing servants shall not fail of a recompense, proportioned to their faithfulness, zeal, and diligence; and all slothful, unwilling servants shall be called to account. Taking his name, and professing to do his business, makes men accountable at his bar. And how sad an account have slothful servants to give! The apostle adds, What is my reward then? ver. 18. What is it for which I expect a recompense from God? That when I preach the gospel, I may make it without charge, that I abuse not my power in the gospel. He would willingly and cheerfully deny himself for the honour of Christ, and the interest of souls. That minister who follows his example, may have cheerful expectations of a recompense.

17. "I have a stewardship committed unto me." *Scholefield.*

Ver. 19-23. The apostle here mentions instances of self-denial for the benefit of others. 1. He asserts his liberty, ver. 19. He was free-born, a citizen of Rome. He was in bondage to none, nor depended upon others for his subsistence; yet he acted as though he were a servant; he laboured for the good of others as a servant; he was careful to please as a servant to his master; he acted as if he had no privileges; that he might make the more converts to christianity. He made himself a servant, that they might be made free. He accommodated himself to all sorts of people. Though he looked on the ceremonial law as a yoke taken off by Christ, yet in many instances he submitted to it, that he might work upon

the jews, remove their prejudices, prevail with them to hear the gospel, and win them over to Christ.

To those that are without law, as without law, that is, to the gentiles, whether converted to the christian faith or not. In things where there was liberty, he could comply for their advantage. He would reason with the philosophers in their own way. As to converted gentiles, he behaved among them as one not under the bondage of the Jewish laws. Though he would transgress no laws of Christ, to please any man, yet he would accommodate himself to all men, where he might do it lawfully, to gain some. Doing good was the study and business of his life; and, that he might, reach this end, he did not stand on privileges. To the weak he became as weak, that he might gain the weak, ver. 22. Where any, through the weakness of their understandings, or the strength of their prejudices, were likely to fall into idolatry or other sin through his use of his liberty, he refrained himself, that he might gain their souls. He became all things to all men, that he might, by all lawful means, gain some. He would not sin against God, to save the soul of his neighbour, but he would very cheerfully and readily deny himself. The rights of God he could not give up, but he might resign his own, and he very often did so for the good of others. This he did for the honour of Christ, whose the gospel is, and the salvation of souls, for which it was designed. A heart warmed with zeal for God, and breathing after the salvation of men, will not insist on rights and privileges interfering with this design. They manifestly abuse their power in the gospel, who employ it not to edification, but destruction; they breathe nothing of its spirit. A mind free from narrow bigotry, enlarged by comprehensive views of the gospel, and taught to keep in view continually the great end of doing good, will wave minute discussions, and by the most conciliatory means argue with men on their own principles, and bring them to saving views of the gospel. Yet we must carefully watch against extremes, and warn against relying on any thing but trust in Christ alone. We must not tolerate such errors or faults as may injure others or disgrace the gospel. A

simple heart, a single eye, and habitual reliance on God for heavenly wisdom, will carry a man through services and dangers, against which no rules will guard

Ver. 24—27. In these verses the apostle speaks of the great encouragement he had to act in this manner. He had a glorious prize, an incorruptible crown, in view. He compares himself to the racers and combatants in the isthmian games, an allusion well understood by the Corinthians, because they were celebrated in their neighbourhood. He excites them to their duty; So run, that ye may obtain. In your races, only one man can win the prize. In the christian race all may run so as to obtain. There is the greatest encouragement, therefore, to persevere constantly, and diligently, and vigorously, in this course. The apostle did not so run in this race as to leave the event uncertain, or to be willing to be left among the obscure, undistinguished multitude of losers. He directs them in their course, setting more fully in view his own example, still carrying on the allusion. 1. Those who ran in their games were kept to a spare diet. They refrained from the food they might eat, and from the liberties they used on other occasions. Should not christians much more abridge themselves of their liberty, for so glorious an end as obtaining the prize set before them? 2. They inured themselves to hardships. Those who fought in these exercises, practised by beating the air, but there is no room for any such exercise in the christian warfare. Their enemies are ever at hand: and for this reason they must fight, not as those that beat the air, but must strive with all their might. One enemy is, the body; this must be kept under. By the body we are to understand fleshly appetites and inclinations. Those who would pursue the interests of their souls, must combat hard with fleshly lusts. The body must not be suffered to rule.

The apostle presses this advice on the Corinthians, by arguments drawn from the same contenders. 1. Can they use abstinence in diet, exert themselves in racing, expose their bodies to so much hardship in a combat, who have no more in view than the empty applause of the multitude, or a crown of leaves? And shall not christians, who seek for the

approbation of the sovereign Judge, and a crown of glory from his hands, exert themselves in beating down all their fleshly inclinations, and the strong holds of sin? 2. All run, but one only receives the prize. Every racer is uncertain whether he shall win it or not. But the christian racer is at no such uncertainty. Every one may run here so as to obtain; but he must keep to the path of duty prescribed, *ver.* 26. He who keeps within the limits prescribed, and keeps on in his race, will never lose his crown, though others may get theirs before him. 3. The apostle sets before himself and them the danger of yielding to fleshly inclinations, pampering the body, and its lusts and appetites; I keep my body under, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a cast-away, *ver.* 27, rejected, disapproved, one to whom the Judge will not decree the crown. The allusion to the games runs through the sentence. A preacher of salvation may yet miss it. A holy fear of himself was necessary to preserve the fidelity of an apostle; how much more necessary is it to our preservation! Holy fear of ourselves, and not presumptuous confidence, is the best security against apostasy from God, and final rejection by him. This did not imply that the apostle doubted his acceptance or perseverance, but it showed the Corinthians the nature of his assurance, and cautioned them not to rest in such hopes as were consistent with self-indulgence.

Let us learn from hence humility and caution; learn to watch against dangers which will surround us as long as we dwell in the body, and rejoice in the guardianship of the Lord Jesus Christ, who will at length deliver his servants from every evil work, and preserve them to his heavenly kingdom.—(80.)

24—27. This passage abounds with terms and imagery referring to the grecian public games. It may be paraphrased thus: "Know you not that in the grecian stadium great numbers run with the utmost contention to secure the prize, but only one person wins and receives? With the same ardour and perseverance do you run, that you may seize the garland of celestial glory. Every one also who enters the lists as a combatant, submits to a very rigid and severe regimen. They do this to gain a fading chaplet, that is only composed of the decaying leaves of a wild olive, but in our view is hung up the unfolding wreath of immortality. With this in full prospect I run the christian race, not distressed with wretched uncertainty concerning its final issue

I engage as a combatant, but deal not my blows in empty air. But I inure my body to the severest discipline, and bring all its appetites into subjection; lest when I have proclaimed the glorious prize to others, I should at last be rejected as unworthy to obtain it." This representation of the christian race must have strongly impressed the minds of the Corinthians, as they were so often spectators of the isthmian games, which were celebrated on the isthmus upon which their city was situated. It is very properly introduced with "Know ye not," for every citizen in Corinth was acquainted with every minute circumstance of this most splendid and pompous ceremony. See *T. H. Horne*.

25. The crowns bestowed on victors in the ancient games, though of evergreens, would soon fade and perish. In the olympic games they were of wild olive, in the pythian of laurel, in the isthmian of pine tree.

27. The word rendered "castaway," signifies one who is disapproved by the judge of the games, as not having fairly deserved the prize.

CHAPTER X.

The apostle, returning to his argument about things offered to idols, reminds the Corinthians of the great privileges, and yet terrible overthrow of the israelites in the wilderness, ver. 1-5. Cautions them against all idolatrous, and other sinful practices, like theirs, lest they themselves, notwithstanding their gospel privileges, should also fall under God's sore displeasure, 6-12. Comforts them against temptations, 13; and cautions to flee from idolatry, 14. Shows that partaking, in a religious way, of things offered to idols, was inconsistent with their having communion with Christ at his table, 15-22; but allows of eating such things, as common food sold in the market, or at a civil entertainment, provided he be with a single eye to the glory of God, and without offence to the consciences of others, 23-33.

Ver. 1-5. To dissuade the Corinthians from communion with idolaters, and security in any sinful course, the apostle sets before them the example of the jews, the church under the Old Testament. In these verses he reckons up their privileges. It is a history very instructive and monitory. As to their deliverance from Egypt; the ancestors of the jews were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea. They were all under the Divine covering and conduct. The cloud was sometimes shining to show them their way, sometimes dark to hide them from their pursuing enemies; and sometimes spread itself over them to defend them from the burning sun in the sandy desert, Ps. 105. 39. They were miraculously conducted through the

Red Sea, where the pursuing egyptians were drowned. A type of our redemption by Christ, who saves us by conquering and destroying his enemies and ours. They were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud, and in the sea, ver. 2, or into Moses, that is, brought under obligation to Moses' law and covenant, as we are by baptism under the christian law and covenant. It was to them a typical baptism. The whole nation were thus acknowledged as the church of God, even as all professing christians were admitted into the church by baptism. They did all eat of the same spiritual meat, and drink of the same spiritual drink, that we do. The manna on which they fed was a type of Christ crucified, the Bread which came down from heaven, which whoso eateth shall live for ever. Their drink was a stream fetched from a Rock which followed them in their journeyings in the wilderness; and this Rock was Christ, that is, in type and figure. He is the Rock on which the christian church is built; and of the streams that issue from him all believers drink, and are refreshed. All the jews did eat of this meat, and drink of this rock, called here a spiritual rock, because it typified spiritual things. It typified the sacred influences of the Holy Spirit, as given to believers through Christ. These were great privileges. One would think that all who ate of that spiritual meat, and drank of that spiritual drink, would have been holy and acceptable to God. Yet it was otherwise, ver. 5. Men may enjoy many and great spiritual privileges in this world, yet come short of eternal life. Many of those baptized unto Moses in the cloud and sea, who had their faith of his Divine commission confirmed by these miracles, were yet overthrown in the wilderness, and never saw the promised land. Let none presume upon their great privileges, or profession of the truth; these will not secure heavenly happiness, nor prevent judgments here on earth, if the root of the matter be not in us.

2. *Hammond* and others take the sense to be, "were, by passing under the cloud (yielding themselves to its guidance) and through the sea, as it were baptized, or initiated into the religion promulgated by Moses; and thus and thoroughly recognised his Divine mission, and bound themselves in future to obey its laws."

4. Many suppose that reference is here made to the stream which gushed from Horeb, in a

miraculous manner. Exod. 17. 6. and that it furnished the Israelites with water, during the greater part of their abode in the wilderness, either by supplying the different parts of the desert, or by following them in a miraculous manner. But *Cabon* and others understand it not of a natural rock, but of a spiritual rock. *Bloomfield* says, The sense then is, that Christ, who is typified by that rock, every where accompanied and was present with them, supplying miraculously produced water, which, as it never failed them, might be said, popularly, to follow them, as Christ, who produced it, did. Or, simply, St. Paul only uses the word with reference to the Antitype Christ.

Ver. 6—14. The apostle having recited the privileges of the jews, proceeds to give an account of their faults and punishments, which are a warning to us against the like sins, if we would escape the like punishments. 1. We are to shun inordinate desires after carnal objects; not lust after evil things, as they lusted, ver. 6. They had food for their supply, but, not content, they asked meat for their lusts, Ps. 106. 14. Carnal desires gain strength by indulgence, therefore should be checked in their first rise: if once they prevail, we know not whither they will carry us. 2. He warns against idolatry, ver. 7. The sin of the golden calf is referred to, Exod. 32. 6. They sacrificed to their idol, then feasted on the sacrifices, and then danced before it. The apostle is speaking to the case of the Corinthians. Even eating and drinking the sacrifices before the idol, and as things sacrificed, was idolatry, which, by the example of the israelites, they should be warned to avoid. 3. Most of the gods whom the heathens served, were represented as patterns of licentiousness; and much was committed in the worship of many of them. Let us fear the sins of Israel, if we would shun their plagues. 4. He warns against tempting Christ, ver. 9. He was with the church in the wilderness; he was the Angel of the covenant, who went before them. But he was greatly grieved and provoked by them. For which God sent fiery serpents, Numb. 21. 5, 6, by which many were stung mortally. And it is but just to fear, that such as tempt Christ under the present dispensation, will be left by him in the power of the old serpent. 5. He warns against murmuring; some of them also murmured, and were destroyed by the destroyer, ver. 10, by an executioner of Divine vengeance. Murmuring

against Divine disposals and commands, is a sin that greatly provokes God.

All these things happened to them for ensamples, and were written for our admonition, ver. 11. Not only the laws and ordinances of the jews, but the providences of God toward them, were typical. Their history was written to be a standing admonition to the church, even under the last and most perfect dispensation; To us, on whom the end of the world is come. For the admonition of christians "on whom the completion of the ages was come," who enjoyed the advantages which were the end and perfection of the old dispensations, and who lived under the light of the last and most complete revelation that was to be given to the world. And, in proportion to light, privileges, and encouragements, so ought holy obedience to be. Nothing in scripture is written in vain; and it is our wisdom and duty to receive instruction from it.

Upon this the apostle grounds a caution, ver. 12. Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall. Others have fallen, and so may we. And we are most likely to fall, when most confident of our own strength. The christian's best security against all sin is distrust of himself, putting him fully upon vigilance and dependence on God. God has not promised to keep us from falling, if we do not look to ourselves.

But to this word of caution, a word of comfort is added, ver. 13. Though it is displeasing to God for us to presume, it is not pleasing to him for us to despair. Our trials will be proportioned to our strength, or strength shall be supplied in proportion to our temptations. We live indeed in a tempting world, where we are compassed about with snares. Every place, condition, relation, employment, and enjoyment, abounds with them; yet we may fetch comfort from such a passage. 1. No temptation, says the apostle, hath yet taken you, but such as is common to man. Others have the like burdens, and the like temptations: what they bear up under, and break through, we may also. 2. Men may be false, and the world may be false; but God is faithful, and our strength and security are in him. He never will disappoint the hope and trust of his children. 3. He is wise as well as faithful, and will

proportion our burden to our strength. He knows what we can bear. If we rely upon him, and resolve to approve ourselves faithful to him, we need not perplex ourselves with the difficulties in our way, God will take care they shall not be too great for us to encounter. 4. He will make them to issue well. He will make a way to escape, either the trial itself, or at least the mischief of it. There is no valley so dark, but he can find a way through it; no affliction so grievous, but he can prevent, or remove, or enable us to support it, and in the end, overrule it to our advantage.

And upon this argument is grounded another caution against idolatry; My dearly beloved. From tender affection he presses this advice upon them. Flee idolatry; shun all approaches towards it. Idolatry is the greatest affront to the true God. We have full encouragement to flee from sin, and to be faithful to God. We cannot fall by temptation, if we cleave fast to him. Let us then be warned to keep at a distance from every forbidden indulgence, not to tempt Christ by running into the dangers by which many have perished; and to avoid all murmurings and disputings, by which the destroyer has made such havoc in the church. Whether the world smiles or frowns, it is an enemy; but believers shall be strengthened to overcome it, with all its terrors and enticements. The fear of the Lord put into their hearts will be one great means of safety; we should therefore flee temptation, and not parley with it. Let us show wisdom by our careful and circumspect conduct.

8. This states only the persons who died of the pestilence, but in Numb. 25. 9, the 1,000 found guilty of idolatry, and slain with the sword are included.

9. In this passage Christ is clearly pointed out as existing under the old covenant, and specially designated as the Jehovah who was tempted by the israelites in the wilderness. We have here, therefore, a plain declaration of Christ's Divinity.—*Wesley*.

11. Here is an allusion to the Jewish mode of computing the duration of the world, and distributing it into three periods of 3,000 years each.—*Lightfoot*.

Ver. 15—22. Would not they all allow that the cup of wine which was used in the Lord's supper to represent spiritual blessings, and as an act of praise and thanksgiving to God, after it

had been blessed and set apart by prayer for that purpose, was a token of their communion in the blood of Christ, and partaking the benefits procured thereby, as the atonement for sin? And was not the bread a token of their participating in his body? Did not the joining in that ordinance imply a profession of faith in Christ crucified, and of adoring gratitude to him for this purchased salvation? If a man really intended in his heart what he professed in this ordinance, he would actually participate in the Saviour's blood shed, and his body broken, for the sins of the world. For Christians by this ordinance, and the faith therein professed, were united as the grains of wheat in one loaf of bread, or as the members in the human body, seeing they were all united to Christ, and had fellowship with him and one another.

This is confirmed from the Jewish worship and customs. Those admitted to eat the offerings, partook of the sacrifice itself, as made for them, and therefore were held to worship God, and be in alliance or covenant with him, even the God of Israel, to whom the sacrifice was made; this was a token of holding communion with him. The apostle applies this to the feasting with idolaters. The food was not changed as to its nature; was fit to be eaten as common food. But eating it as part of a heathen sacrifice, was therefore to worship the god to whom it was made, and have fellowship or communion with him; just as he who eats the Lord's supper, is supposed to partake in the Christian sacrifice, or as they who ate the Jewish sacrifices partook of what was offered on their altar. It was virtually renouncing christianity. Communion with Christ, and communion with devils, could never be had at once. One must be renounced, if the other was maintained, ver. 21. God and Mammon never can be served together, nor fellowship be had with Christ and Satan. Those who communicate with devils, virtually renounce Christ. Such as indulge in gluttony or drunkenness, and by so doing make their own table the table of devils, or keep up fellowship with Satan by a course of wilful wickedness, cannot partake truly of the cup and table of the Lord. They may use the sign, but do not the thing signified thereby. How much reason have we to look to it, that every sin and idol be

renounced by us, when we eat and drink at the Lord's table; and that we seriously look into the sincerity of our profession of faith in him and his atonement.

It is probable that many among the Corinthians made light of being at heathen feasts. But the apostle bids them beware. Those who have fellowship with other gods, provoke the Lord to jealousy, Deut. 32. 16. It is dangerous to provoke God's anger, unless we could withstand his power. This should be considered by all who continue in the love of sin, while they profess to keep up communion with Christ. Attention to the greatness of God's power should restrain us from doing anything to displease him. Can we resist his power, or control it? And if not, shall we arm it against us? Union and communion with Christ and his people, by partaking his ordinances, should engage us to avoid all fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, and all conformity to the vanities of the world. If christians will venture into places, and join in sacrifices, to the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, assuredly they will provoke God, and why should they foolishly act as if they were stronger than he is?

Ver. 23—33. The apostle shows there were cases wherein christians might eat what had been offered to idols, without sin. Some such the apostle here enumerates. But that may be lawful, which is not expedient, which will not edify. A christian must not merely consider what is lawful, but what is expedient, and for edification. He must be concerned not to hurt his neighbour; and act, so that he may not hinder others, in their holiness, comfort, or salvation. Circumstances may make that a sin, which in itself is none. These must be weighed, and the expediency of an action, and its tendency, must be considered before it be done. The priest's share of heathen sacrifices was frequently offered to sale, after it had been offered in the temples. Now the apostle tells them, they need not be so scrupulous as to ask the butcher in the market, whether the meat he sold had been offered to an idol. It was there sold as common food, and as such might be bought and used; for the earth

is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof, ver. 26, and the fruit and products of the earth were designed by him, the great Proprietor, for the use and subsistence of all mankind, of his own children and servants among them.

The apostle does not prohibit their accepting the invitation of those who believed not, ver. 27. Christianity by no means binds us from the common offices of humanity, or allows an uncourteous behaviour to any of our own kind, however they may differ from us in religious sentiments or practices. But this is not to be understood of religious festivals; for these last among the heathens were feasts upon their sacrifices, which were condemned before, as a participation in idolatrous worship. At a common entertainment they might expect common food; and they needed not move scruples in their own minds, whether what was set before them was otherwise or not. Though christians should be very careful to know and understand their duty, yet they should not perplex themselves by needless inquiries.

Yet at such an entertainment, if any should say it was a thing that had been offered to idols, they should refrain. The earth is the Lord's, therefore you may eat without scruple what is set before you as common food; and yet, because the earth is the Lord's, eat nothing that will give offence, lay a stumbling-block before others, and encourage some in idolatry, or tempt others to eat when they are not clear in their own mind that it is lawful, and so sin, and wound their own consciences. Christians should be very cautious of doing what may prejudice the consciences of others, and weaken their influence over them, which is by all means to be kept up.

He urges them to refrain, where they would give offence, while yet he allows it lawful to eat what was set before them as common food, though it had been offered in sacrifice. Another man's conscience is no measure to our own conduct. What he thinks unlawful, is not therefore made unlawful to me, but may be a matter of liberty still. But why should I, using the liberty I have, give occasion to those who are scandalized, to speak evil of me? According to this advice of the apostle, christians should take care not to use their liberty, to the hurt of others, or to their own reproach.

The apostle lays down a general rule for the christian's conduct, and applies it to this case, ver. 31, 32, namely that in eating and drinking, and in all we do, we should aim at the glory of God, at pleasing and honouring him. This is the great end of all practical religion, and must direct us where particular and express rules are wanting. Nothing must be done against the glory of God, and the good of our neighbours, connected with it. The jews should not be unnecessarily grieved or prejudiced, who have such abhorrence of idols, nor should heathens be countenanced in their idolatry, by any behaviour, which may seem to countenance their idols; nor young converts take any encouragement from our conduct, to retain veneration for the heathen gods and worship. A christian should be devoted to God, considering the Divine precepts, and the tendency of his actions, with reference also to the construction others would put upon them. Thus the whole tenour of their conduct should show the excellency of the gospel, and win others to it.

He presses all by his own example, ver. 33. A preacher may press his advice home when he enforces it with his own example. He is most likely to promote a public spirit in others, who can give evidence of it in himself. And it is highly commendable in a minister to forego his own advantage, that he may promote the salvation of his hearers. It is a station for public usefulness, and never can be faithfully filled by a man of such narrow spirit and selfish principles, as would prejudice the minds of unbelievers, and disquiet the consciences of weak believers.

Let us walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise. The views and prejudices of men may be various, and it is not possible to please all in every respect. But a holy, peaceable, and benevolent spirit, will disarm the opposition of the greatest enemies, and may, through the Divine blessing, lead them to investigate the nature of that gospel which produces such excellent fruit, and to seek to partake of its blessings.—(87.)

25. When the heathen priests had more sacrifices than they could themselves consume, it is very probable that they would cause them to be sold in the neighbouring markets. See note §. 1. *Pitay*, in his letter to Trajan, notices, as

one consequence of the spread of christianity, there had been fewer purchasers for the sacrifices. 29. "But that of the other."—*Scholefield*.

CHAPTER XI.

The apostle, after an exhortation to follow him, ver. 1, commends the church for observing his former orders, and proceeds to censure, and correct some great irregularities among them, in women's speaking publicly with unveiled faces, even under their prophetic impulses, 3—16. And, in contentions, schisms, and disorderly celebrations of the Lord's supper, 17—22. To rectify their scandalous abuses of that sacred ordinance, he reminds them of the nature and design of its institution, as he received it from Christ himself, 23—26. And directs them how to attend upon it in a due manner, and to avoid the danger of unworthily receiving it, 27—34.

Ver. 1. The first verse of this chapter seems to be more properly the close to the last, in which the apostle enforced the cautions he had given against the abuse of liberty, by his own example: Be ye followers of me, as I also am of Christ. It is plain from this that the apostle Paul not only preached such doctrine as they ought to believe, but led such a life as they ought to imitate. Yet Paul himself would be followed no further than he followed Christ.

Christ then being our perfect Exemplar, the particular actions and general conduct of men, as related in the scriptures, should be regarded by us as models of imitation only so far as they are conformed to that standard.—(33.)

Ver. 2—16. The apostle here enters upon particulars respecting their public assemblies, which extends to the conclusion of chap. 14. He begins with commendation of what was praiseworthy. When we reprove what is amiss in any, it is very proper to commend what is good in them; it will show the reproof is not from ill-will, and a humour of finding fault; it will therefore procure the more regard to it. In the abundance of spiritual gifts bestowed on the Corinthians, it seems that several women had been endowed with the spirit of prophecy, which enabled them to offer prayers for the congregation, or even to give instructions. In this respect, however, some abuses had crept in, and the apostle would have them understand

that Christ was the immediate Head or Ruler of every man among them, whose honour was concerned in every part of their conduct; and that the man was the immediate head and ruler of the woman, to whose authority God had subjected her, and who would therefore be disgraced by any impropriety in her behaviour. He also showed that Christ as Mediator was subject to the Father. As Christ did the will, and sought the honour of God, so the christian should avow his subjection to Christ, doing his will and seeking his glory; and the woman should acknowledge her subjection to the man, doing what was honourable to him. To know our duty in various particulars we should study our relations to God and to each other.

He reprehends the woman's praying or prophesying uncovered, or the man's doing this covered, ver. 4, 5. It was a mark or token of subjection, for persons to be veiled, or covered, in the eastern countries, contrary to the custom of ours, where being covered, betokens superiority and dominion. From this we may the better understand the reasons on which he grounds his reprehension. 1. The man that prays or prophesies with his head covered, dishonoureth his Head, that is, Christ, by appearing unsuitable to the rank in which God has placed him. We should, even in our dress and habit, avoid every thing that may dishonour Christ. The woman, on the other hand, who prays or prophesies with the head uncovered, dishonoureth her head, that is, the man. She appears in the dress of her superior, and throws off the token of her subjection, which was the fault of these prophetesses at Corinth. The order in which Divine Wisdom has placed persons and things, is best and fittest. 2. Another reason was, that the man is the representative of the glorious dominion and headship God has over the world, ver. 7; and the woman shone with reflection of his glory, being made superior to the other creatures here below, but in subjection to her husband, deriving that honour from him out of whom she was made. 3. The woman was naturally made subject to man, because made for his help and comfort. And she should do nothing, in christian assemblies, which looked like a claim of equality. 4. She ought to have power on her

head, because of the angels. Power, that is, a veil, the token, not of her having power or superiority, but being under the power of her husband, and subjected to him. Thus would the apostle have the women appear in christian assemblies, even though they spake there by inspiration, because angels were present. Their presence should restrain christians from all improprieties in the worship of God. We should behave in the public assemblies so as to express reverence for God, and content and satisfaction with the rank in which he has placed us.

This is guarded with a caution, ver. 11, 12. Nevertheless, neither is the man without the woman, nor the woman without the man in the Lord. They were made for one another. They were to be mutual comforts and blessings, not one a slave, and the other a tyrant. The authority and subjection should be no more than is suitable in such near relation and close union to each other. As it is the will of God that the woman know her place, so it is his will also, that the man abuse not his power. God has so arranged matters both in the kingdom of providence and that of grace, that the authority and subjection of each party should be for mutual help and benefit. This argument is enforced from the natural covering provided for the woman, ver. 13—15. Judge in yourselves, consult your own reason; Is it comely for a woman to pray to God uncovered? Is it not a distinction between the sexes which custom has kept up among all civilized nations? The woman's hair is a natural covering; to wear it long, is a glory to her; but for a man to have long hair, or cherish it, is a token of softness and effemacy. It should be our concern, especially in christian and religious assemblies, to make no breach upon the rules of natural decency. Those who were contentious, are referred to the usages and customs of the churches, ver. 16. It was the common usage of the churches, for women to appear in public assemblies, and join in public worship, veiled; and it was manifestly decent that they should do so. Those must be very contentious indeed, who would quarrel with this:

The christian religion sanctions national customs wherever these correspond with the great principles of truth and holiness; affected singularities in

dress receive no countenance from the apostolic writings.—(87.)

There are many ways in which pious females may be useful, though no longer inspired to pray or prophesy in the church: such are works of charity and benevolence, modest and consistent deportment, instructing the young and ignorant of their own sex, by their writings, by promoting religious and charitable institutions, and by works and offices of piety among themselves. Christianity places them in their proper sphere, it deprives them of no opportunity for exerting their peculiar talents, or of using their influence to the greatest advantage.—(87.)

3. When God is said to be the head of Christ, it relates to his mediatorial character and authority, and we cannot from thence infer that He does not partake of the same Divine nature.

4, 5. The Jews prayed with their heads covered, and the Coisathians seem to have conformed to their practice, against which the apostle here remonstrates. The women, when praying by Divine inspiration, seem to have had their hair dishevelled, like the pagan priestesses when delivering their false oracles, which is here forbidden.

6. It was the custom then, as now, for the men to wear their hair short, which is here meant by shaven or shorn.

10. It is generally allowed that the word rendered "power," here signifies "a veil." It was and still is unusual in the east, for any women of character to appear unveiled except in the presence of very near relatives; but the idolatrous priestesses, it is well known, uttered their responses with wild looks and dishevelled hair. It is evident from this passage and chap. 14, that the christian prophetesses did not always exercise their extraordinary gifts in a becoming manner. Some suppose that the word "angels" may refer to ministers, but it is more probable the apostle refers to the holy angels, who may be considered as present in our assemblies, a consideration fitted to inspire the mind with solemn awe. These holy creatures are represented as veiling their faces, in token of profound humility. Isa. 6. 2.—See *Lothian*.

Bloomfield considers that the original word 'exousia' denotes a female ornament of braided hair, united with some kind of ornamental veil. The word rendered "angels" he considers is an error of transcription for one very similar, signifying "those who came to mock," who attended the christian assemblies to remark upon any improprieties they saw.

Ver. 17—22. In this passage the apostle rebukes the disorders in their partaking of the Lord's supper. The ordinances of Christ, if they do not make us better, will be apt to make us worse. If they do not mend, they will harden. Upon coming together, they fell into divisions, schisms. Uncharitableness, alienation of affection, especially

if it grows up to discord, and feuds, and contentions, constitutes schism. Christians may separate from each other's communion, yet be charitable one towards another; they may continue in the same communion, yet be uncharitable. This last is schism, rather than the former. The apostle had heard of the Corinthians' divisions, and tells them he had too much reason to believe it. For, adds he, there must be heresies also; not only quarrels, but factions, perhaps such corrupt opinions as strike at the foundation of christianity, and sound religion. No marvel there should be breaches of christian love in the churches, when such offences will come as shall make shipwreck of faith and a good conscience. Such offences must come. God permits them, that such hearts as will bear the trial, may appear faithful by their constant adherence to the truths and ways of God, notwithstanding the temptations of seducers. The wisdom of God can make the wickedness and errors of others the means of manifesting more clearly the piety and integrity of the saints.

The apostle tells them, that their conduct destroyed the purpose and use of such an institution, ver. 20. Thus to eat the outward elements, was not to partake of Christ's body. There is a careless and irregular eating of the Lord's supper, which is as none at all; it will but increase guilt. Such an eating was that of the Corinthians; their practices were direct contradiction to the purposes of this sacred institution. Heathens used to eat and drink plentifully at their feasts on their sacrifices, ver. 21. Many wealthy Corinthians seem to have taken the same liberty at the Lord's table, or at least at the love-feasts, annexed to the supper. The rich despised the poor, and ate and drank up the provisions they brought, before the poor were allowed to partake; thus some wanted, while others had more than enough. This was profaning a sacred institution, and corrupting a Divine ordinance. What should have been a bond of mutual amity and affection, was made an instrument of discord and division. The poor were deprived of the food prepared for them, and the rich turned a feast of charity into excess. Their conduct carried in it a contempt of God's house, or of the church, ver.

22. Such behaviour discouraged the poor, whose souls were as dear to Christ as those of the rich. Common meals may be managed after a common manner, but religious feasts should be attended religiously. Also, it is a heinous evil, and severely to be censured, for christians to treat their fellow-christians with contempt and insolence, especially at the Lord's table. This is doing what they can to pour contempt on Divine ordinances. And we should be careful that nothing in our behaviour at the Lord's table, appears to make light of so sacred an institution. How often do even professors of the gospel meet together for the worse rather than the better. The Lord's supper is not now made an occasion for an imtemperate revel, but is it not sometimes made the support of pharisaical pride, or a cloak for hypocrisy? Against such abuses let us strenuously protest.

Let us never rest in the outward rites or exercises of worship, how decently and regularly soever performed; but look to our inward temper, and to the conduct of our minds, if we desire to maintain their peace, and that our assembling together should be for the better, and not for the worse.—(80.)

18, 19. Here schisms and heresies are taken in the same sense as meaning divisions and parties in the church, but the latter term is now generally applied to separations from it upon matters of faith.

20. This apparently refers to the agapa, or love-feast, accompanying, and at times preceding the Lord's supper. To this each brought a portion, and the more wealthy seem to have taken again the food they brought, almost to the exclusion of the poorer sort, who thus would fare scantily and feel aggrieved. *Bloomfield* says, The fault with which they are charged is gross selfishness, at a meal united with the eucharistical one, and formed on such principles of christian charity and brotherly communion, as would be a proper introduction or supplement to it. These love-feasts are alluded to Jude 12, and seem to have been joined to the Lord's supper in imitation of our Lord's uniting it to the passover feast.

Some have thought that the Corinthians confounded the partaking of the Lord's supper with their usual meals. *Doddridge* remarks that Socrates reproves other greeks, the athletes, for similar conduct at their common suppers.

• Ver. 23—34. To rectify the gross corruptions and irregularities of the Corinthians, the apostle describes the sacred institution, of which he had the knowledge by revelation from Christ. He gives a more particular account of the

institution than we meet with elsewhere. Our Lord Jesus Christ, the very night wherein he was betrayed, just as he was entering on his sufferings, which are therein commemorated, took bread, and when he had given thanks, or blessed it, as it is in Matt. 26. 26, he brake, and said, Take, eat; this is my body, broken for you; this do in remembrance of me. And in like manner he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the New Testament in my blood; this do, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me, ver. 24, 25. Observe,

1. As to the visible signs; these are the bread and wine; the former of which is called bread many times over in this passage, even after what the papists call consecration. What is eaten is called bread, though at the same time it is said to be the body of the Lord, plainly showing that the apostle knew nothing of the absurd doctrine of transubstantiation. St. Matthew tells us, our Lord bid them all drink of the cup, chap. 26. 27, as if he would, by this expression, provide against the church of Rome, depriving the laity of the cup. Both the bread and the cup are made use of because it is a holy feast. Nor is it here, or any where, said to be necessary, that any particular liquor should be in the cup. It is plain that wine was the liquor used by our Saviour, though it was, perhaps, mingled with water, according to the jewish custom. But this by no means renders it unlawful to observe the Lord's supper, where persons cannot obtain wine. In every place of scripture in which we have an account of this part of the institution, it is always expressed figuratively. The cup is put for what was in it, without specifying the liquor. The things signified by these outward signs, are Christ's body and blood, his body broken, his blood shed, together with all the benefits which flow from his death and sacrifice. His blood is the seal and sanction of all the privileges of the new covenant: and worthy receivers take it as such, at this holy ordinance. They have the new testament, and their own title to all the blessings of the new covenant; confirmed to them by his blood.

2. We have here the manner in which the materials of the sacrament are to be used. Our Saviour's actions were taking the bread and cup, giving thanks,

breaking the bread, and giving about both the one and the other. The actions of the communicants were, to take the bread and eat, to take the cup and drink, and to do both in remembrance of Christ. But the outward acts are not the whole or the principal part of what is to be done at this holy ordinance. Our Saviour, having undertaken to offer himself to God, and procure, by his death, the remission of sins, with all other gospel benefits, for true believers, this is here set forth, as the food of souls. And as food will yield no nourishment without being eaten, here the communicants are to take and eat, or to receive Christ and feed upon him, his grace and benefits, and by faith convert them into nourishment to their souls. They are to take him as their Lord and Life, yield themselves up to him, and live upon him. He is our Life, Col. 3. 4.

3. We have an account of the ends of this institution. It was to be done in remembrance of Christ, to keep fresh in our minds an ancient favour, his dying for us, as well as to remember an absent friend, even Christ interceding for us, in virtue of his death, at God's right hand. The best of friends, and the greatest acts of kindness, are here to be remembered. It was to show forth Christ's death, to declare and publish it. It is not merely in remembrance of Christ, of what he has done and suffered, that this ordinance was instituted; but to commemorate, to celebrate, his glorious condescension and grace in our redemption. We declare his death to be our life, the spring of all our comforts and hopes. And we glory in such a declaration; we show forth his death, and plead it as our accepted sacrifice and ransom. We set it in view of our faith, for our own comfort and quickening: and we declare, before the world, by this service, that we are the disciples of Christ, who trust in him alone for salvation, and acceptance with God. This ordinance should be frequent; as often as ye eat this bread, ver. 26—we cannot maintain life and health without often taking food. And it is fit that this spiritual diet should be taken often. The ancient churches celebrated this ordinance every Lord's day, if not on every day when they assembled for worship. It must be perpetual. It was our Lord's will that we should thus celebrate his death and passion,

till he come in his glory, with his holy angels, to put an end to the present state of things. The Lord's supper is not a temporary ordinance, but one that is standing and perpetual.

The apostle lays before the Corinthians the danger of receiving unworthily; of using it with a temper of mind unsuitable to it; or keeping up the covenant with sin and death, while professedly renewing and confirming the covenant with God. Such contract great guilt. They shall be guilty of violating this sacred institution; of despising his body and blood, ver. 27. They act as if they accounted the blood of the covenant, wherewith they are sanctified, an unholy thing, Heb. 10. 29. They provoke God, and are likely to bring punishment on themselves, ver. 29. No doubt they incur great guilt, and so render themselves liable to condemnation, to spiritual judgments and eternal misery. But fearful believers should not be discouraged from attending at this holy ordinance. The Holy Spirit never indited this scripture to deter serious christians from their duty, though the devil has often made this perversion of it, and robbed some christians of their choicest comforts. The Corinthians came to the Lord's table as to a common feast, not making a distinction between that and common food, but setting both on a level: nay, they were perhaps more careless at this sacred feast than they would have been at a civil one. This was very sinful in them, and very displeasing to God, and brought down his judgments on them, ver. 30. Some were punished with sickness, and some with death. Careless and irreverent receiving the Lord's supper may bring punishments in this life. The apostle was addressing christians, and warning them to beware of the temporal judgments with which God chastised his offending servants.

They were chastened of the Lord, that they should not be condemned with the world, ver. 32. Divine chastening is a sign of Divine love, Heb. 12. 6. In the midst of judgment, God remembers mercy: he many times punishes those whom he tenderly loves. It is kindness to use the rod, to prevent the child's ruin. God will visit such iniquity as this with stripes, yet make those stripes the evidence of his loving-kindness. It is better to bear trouble in this world,

than to be miserable to eternity. And God punishes his people, now, to prevent their eternal woe.

The apostle points out the duty of those who would come to the Lord's table. Let a man consider the sacred intention of this holy ordinance; and compare his own views in attending on it, and his disposition of mind for it, and when he has approved himself to his own conscience in the sight of God, then let him partake. Self-examination is necessary to his right attendance at this holy ordinance. Not to find some reason for absenting himself, but that after self-examination and serious preparation, he might commemorate the Lord's death in a proper manner. Observe the duty of those yet unpunished for profanation of this ordinance, ver. 31. If we would thoroughly search ourselves, to condemn and correct what we find amiss, we should prevent Divine judgments. We may be critical as to ourselves, but should be candid in judging others.

The apostle closes all with a caution against the irregularities of which the Corinthians were guilty, ver. 33, 34, at the Lord's table. They were to eat for hunger or pleasure at home, and not change the holy supper to a common feast, lest they should come together for condemnation. Our holy duties, through our own abuse, may prove matter of condemnation. Men may keep sabbaths, hear sermons, and attend at sacraments, yet only aggravate their guilt. Let all look to it, that they do not come together to God's worship, so as to provoke him, and bring down vengeance on themselves. Holy things are to be used in a holy manner, or they are profaned. What else was amiss in this matter, he tells them, he would rectify when he came to them.

The apostles received from Christ, and delivered to the church, that a repentant heart, simple reliance on God's free mercy by faith in Christ, thankful recollection of his sufferings and love, a desire to show forth his death, to profess our obligations to him, and to give up ourselves to his service, are the proper preparations for receiving the Lord's supper. All who can come in this frame of mind, are bound thus to show forth the Lord's death till he comes, and such are not likely to eat or drink unworthily, whatever may be their fears and scruples. In every respect we act most wisely for our

present comfort as well as for our future good, when we judge ourselves that we may not be judged. Personal and family trials should remind us that the Lord has a controversy with us, and that we are apt to be partial or dilatory in judging ourselves; we should therefore deem it a mercy to be chastened of the Lord. Yet we are to act with such seriousness and temperance that we may as much as we can avoid chastenings, which for the present are not joyous but grievous, though they bring forth the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who are exercised thereby.

23. *Doddridge* notices that it is remarkable that the institution of the ordinance of the Lord's supper should make a part of the immediate revelation vouchsafed to the apostle, and this affords a strong argument for the perpetuity of it in the church.

27. In this passage the consecrated element is expressly called bread, even when received, a strong fact against transubstantiation.

29. The word used here does not signify damnation, in the full sense of that word, but judgment. And ver. 32 shows that the judgments here spoken of might be fatherly chastisements. When our translation was made, the word damnation did not bear so strong a sense as now, but meant, condemnation.

CHAPTER XII.

As the Corinthian church was greatly enriched with spiritual gifts, and turned them into occasions of strife and envy, the apostle considers their original, as from God, and their variety and use for the propagation of the gospel, and edification of the church, ver. 1—11. It is illustrated by an allusion to the human body, in which every member has its place, and use, for the good of the whole, 12—26. It is applied to the church of Christ, which is his body; and to the gifts of every particular member, which are to be exercised for the advantage of all the rest, 27—30. The apostle states that there is something more excellent than spiritual gifts, 31.

Ver. 1—11. Spiritual gifts were extraordinary powers, bestowed in the first ages, for the conviction of unbelievers, and propagating the gospel. Gifts and graces greatly differ. Both were freely given of God. But where grace is given, it is for the salvation of those who have it. Gifts are for the advantage and salvation of others; and there may be great gifts, where there is no grace. The extraordinary gifts of the Holy Spirit, were chiefly exercised in the public assemblies, where the Corinthians seem to have vied with each other in such displays of

them, as were very deficient in the spirit of piety and of christian love.

Concerning these spiritual gifts, the extraordinary powers received from the Spirit, 1. The apostle tells them, he would not have them ignorant, either of their origin or use. They came from God, and were to be used for him. Right information is of great use to all religious practice. Gifted men make bad work, who either do not know, or do not advert to the nature and right use of the gifts with which they are endowed.

2. The apostle reminds them of the sad state out of which they had been recovered. While under the conduct of the spirit of gentilism, they could not be influenced by the Spirit of Christ. They were gentiles. They were guilty of the grossest idolatry, the worship even of stocks and stones, through the force of a vain imagination, and the fraud of their priests practising on their ignorance. The body of the people paid their homage and worship to dumb idols. They were dumb notwithstanding their boasted oracles, and could not confer on their worshippers the gift of tongues and of utterance which christians now received. And those who despised these gross conceptions of the vulgar, yet countenanced them by their practice. Could the Spirit of God be among such stupid idolaters, or they be influenced by it?

3. They might discern the gifts from the Spirit of God, true spiritual gifts; No man, speaking by the Spirit, calls Jesus accursed. Both jews and gentiles blasphemed him as an impostor. Yet many jews, who were exorcists and magicians, went about, pretending to work wonders by the Spirit of God; and many gentiles pretended to inspiration. But none could act under the influence, or by the power of the Spirit of God, who disowned and blasphemed Christ: for the Spirit of God bore full witness to Christ, by prophecy, miracles, his resurrection from the dead, the success of his doctrine among men, and its effect upon them; and could never so far contradict itself, as to declare him accursed. On the other hand, no man could say Jesus was the Lord, live by this faith, or work miracles to prove it, but it must be by the Holy Ghost. No man can call Christ Lord, with believing dependence upon him, unless that faith be wrought by the

Holy Ghost. No man can confess this truth in the day of trial, but by the Holy Ghost animating him. We have as necessary a dependence on the Spirit's operation and influence for our sanctification and perseverance, as on the mediation of Christ for our reconciliation and acceptance with God: and no man could confirm this truth with a miracle, but by the Holy Ghost. No evil spirit would assist, if it were in his power, to spread a doctrine and religion ruinous to the devil's kingdom. Whatever pretences there were to inspiration or miracles, among the enemies to christianity, they could not be from the Spirit of God; but no man could believe this with his heart, or prove with a miracle that Jesus was Christ, unless by the Holy Ghost. So that the extraordinary operations and powers among them proceeded from the Spirit of God. All appearances of illumination must be counterfeited in those who refuse the Lord Jesus the honours belonging to him. Such men cannot speak by the Holy Ghost, or according to inspiration.

None can duly honour Christ in his august capacity as Lord and Head over all things, unless they are imbued with that vital, spiritual, and practical religion, which is the work of heavenly grace on the soul. (95)

4. These spiritual gifts have one Author and original, but are of various kinds, ver. 4. There are diversities of gifts, such as revelations, tongues, prophecy, interpretations of tongues: but the same Spirit. There are differences of administrations, or different offices, and officers to discharge them, different ordinances and institutions; but the same Lord, who appointed all, ver. 5. There are diversities of operations. In the effects which followed the exercise of these gifts, whether in miraculous works, or in the conversion of sinners, the whole was produced by the power of the same God, who wrought all these changes on the bodies and the souls of men, through his Son, and by his Spirit, for the glory of his great name. There are various gifts, administrations, and operations, but all proceed from one God, one Lord, one Spirit; that is, from Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, the spring and origin of all spiritual blessings: all have the same author. However different in themselves, all are from God, ver. 6.

Several kinds are here specified, ver. 8—10. To one was given the word of wisdom; an exact understanding and uttering of the way of redemption, the design, nature, and doctrines of the christian religion. To another, the word of knowledge, by the same Spirit; the knowledge of mysteries, wrapped up in the prophecies, types, and histories of the Old Testament; and skill and readiness to give advice and counsel in perplexed cases. To another, faith, by the same Spirit; that is, faith in the Divine power and promise. Faith, whereby they were enabled to trust God in any emergency, and go on in the way of their duty, and own and profess the truths of Christ, whatever were the difficulty or danger. To another, the gift of healing, by the same Spirit; that is, healing the sick, either by laying on of hands, or anointing with oil, or with a bare word. To another, the working of miracles; the exercise of powers, such as raising the dead, restoring the blind to sight, giving speech to the dumb, hearing to the deaf, and the use of limbs to the lame. To another, prophecy: that is, ability to foretell future events; which is the more usual sense of prophecy; or to explain scripture by a peculiar gift of the Spirit. To another, the discerning of spirits; power to distinguish between true and false prophets, or to discern the real and internal qualifications of any person, possessing extraordinary insight into human character. To another, divers kinds of tongues; or ability to speak languages by inspiration. To another, the interpretation of tongues; or ability to render foreign languages readily and properly into their own. With such a variety of spiritual gifts were the first ministers and churches blessed.

5. The end for which these gifts were bestowed, ver. 7. The Spirit was manifested by their exercise. The outward gifts of God's bounty are to be improved for his glory, and employed in doing good to others. No man has them merely for himself. They are intrusted to him; and the more he profits others with them, the more abundantly will they turn to his account, Phil. 4. 17. Spiritual gifts are not for show, but for service; not for pomp and ostentation, but for edification; not to magnify those that have them, but to edify others.

6. The measure and proportion in which

they are given. The Holy Ghost is a Divine person. He works effects, and divides gifts as he will, by his own almighty power, and according to his own pleasure. This is a most clear attestation of the personality, sovereignty, and Godhead of the Holy Ghost. Acute speculators often are ignorant in practical matters, and those most elated with the gifts bestowed on them, commonly are most forgetful of the Giver, and the use that should be made of what he has given. Spiritual gifts have often been abused to support spiritual pride. If we have any knowledge of the truth, or any ability to communicate it, we must give all the glory to God. The greater the endowments, the more the possessor is exposed to additional temptations, and the larger the measure of grace needed to keep him humble and spiritual; and he will probably meet with a more abundant share of painful experiences and humbling dispensations. We have little cause to envy those who are eminent in abilities, or to covet dangerous distinctions; to glory in any bestowed on us, or to despise those who are destitute of them.

4. It is impossible to consider these gifts as natural endowments. This passage also affords the strongest proofs of the Divinity and personality of the Holy Spirit.—*Bloomfield*

8. *Lothian* remarks that the extreme brevity with which these splendid endowments are enumerated, is worthy of notice. Had there been any imposition or fraud, they would have been made the subjects of lengthened declamation. The various shades of difference in the gifts, it may now be impossible to ascertain, though they were doubtless well understood when the epistle was written. He gives a similar view of these gifts to that in the comment, adding from *Micknight*, that "the working of powers," rendered miracles, may refer to the ability the apostles possessed of conferring miraculous gifts on others by the laying on of their hands.

10. *Bloomfield* says the powers and gifts of healing are transposed at ver. 28, 29, 30, which confirms the idea that no diversity of kind was intended.

Ver. 12—26. The wisdom and goodness of the Holy Spirit in the distribution of gifts, are illustrated by a simile. Christ and his church form our body: as head and members, this body is made up of many parts or members, yet but one body: for all the members, Jews and gentiles, bond or free, all are baptized into the same body, and communicate in the same Spirit, ver. 13. Christians become members of this body by baptism:

they are baptized into one body. The outward rite is of Divine institution, significant of the new birth, called therefore the washing of regeneration, Tit. 3. 5 But it is by the Spirit, by the renewing of the Holy Ghost, that we are made members of Christ's body. It is the Spirit's operation, signified by the outward administration, that makes us members. And by communion at the other ordinance we are sustained; but then it is not merely by drinking the wine, but by drinking into one Spirit. The outward administration is a means appointed of God for our participation in this great benefit; but it is baptism by the Spirit, it is internal renovation, and drinking into one Spirit, partaking his sanctifying influence from time to time, that makes us true members of Christ's body, and maintains our union with him. Being animated by one Spirit, makes Christians one body. Deriving continual supplies of that same Spirit, in answer to their earnest desires and believing prayers, they drink more and more into the mind and disposition of Christ; which alludes probably to the wine in the Lord's supper.

Each member has its form, place, and use. 1. The meanest makes a part of the body, ver. 15, 16. So every member of the body mystical cannot have the same place and office: but because not fixed in the same station, or favoured with the same gifts, as others, shall it say, I do not belong to Christ? The meanest member of his body is as much a member as the noblest, and as truly regarded by him. All his members are dear to him.

2. There must be a distinction of members in the body. Were the whole body eye, where were the hearing? Were the whole ear, where were the smelling? ver. 17. If all were one member, where were the body? ver. 19. They are many members, and for that reason there must be a distinction among them, and yet but one body, ver. 20. So it is in the body of Christ; its members must have different uses, and therefore have different powers, and be in different places.

3. We may plainly perceive the Divine wisdom in the distribution of the members; but it was made according to the counsel of God's will; as he pleased, ver. 18. So the members of Christ's body are chosen to such stations, and endued with such gifts, as God pleased. And who should gainsay his pleasure? We

should do the duties of our own place, and not murmur or quarrel with others.

4. All the members of the body are, in some respect, useful and necessary to each other, even those parts which seem most feeble, are quite necessary to life and the well-being of the whole, ver. 21, 22. God has so fitted and tempered them together, that there is no part unnecessary. Nor is there a member of the body of Christ but may and ought to be useful to fellow-members, and at some times, and in some cases, is useful to them. No one should despise and envy another, seeing God has made the distinction between them as he pleased, yet so as to make them valuable to each other, and concerned for each other. The lowest members have their use, and the highest cannot do well without them.

5. The wisdom of Providence has so contrived, that regard and honour should be paid to that which most wanted it, ver. 24. So should the members of Christ's body behave toward their fellow-members, instead of despising or reproaching them, for their infirmities.

6. The members of the natural body have care and concern for each other, ver. 25, 26. And as in the natural body, the pain of one part afflicts the whole, the ease and pleasure of one part affects the whole: so Christian sympathy is Christian duty. We should be so far from slighting our brethren's sufferings, that we should suffer with them; and be so far from envying their honours, that we should rejoice with them.

Have we been baptized into the body of Christ by his regenerating Spirit? and are we drinking into his Spirit by receiving daily from his fullness? If this be our privilege, let us be thankful, and contentedly occupy the place it has pleased the Lord to assign us in his church, seeking to have our hearts influenced by the spirit of love to every member of his body. If in the lowest place, we must not disdain its services as not worth performing, and if in a higher station, we are not to fancy that we do not need our humbler and obscurer brethren. Were it not for the remainders of error and sin, there would be no envyings, jealousies, vain-glory or disregard of others on earth—there is none in heaven. We should feel ourselves sharers in the difficulties of the poor and afflicted, and should deem ourselves

honoured in the usefulness of the more distinguished. The good of the whole should be the uniform object of all, in whatever station they were placed.

Often have we occasion to observe and lament that there exists among religious professors little or nothing of a spirit of unity; little or nothing of sympathy, fellow-feeling, or mutual concern. They meet, they separate; each seeming to think that all he has to do is to get to heaven as well as he can, and leave others to do the same. As to christian communion, it enters not into their religion. How different the view the apostle here sets before us! There can be no such thing among christians as independence. All are intended to be dependent, one upon another, and each is to expect and receive help from the rest. Therefore is it that God has adorned them with divers gifts and qualifications. And the benefit thus communicated, through our connexion with the whole body of believers, will not tend to produce neglect and indolence, but the contrary. It will lead us to covet earnestly the best gifts that the general interest may be promoted. Let us then have more of the spirit of union in our religion. It is only in this united character that many of the choicest evangelical blessings can come to us.—(74.)

Ver. 27—31. The apostle refers to the church of Christ. Again observe.

1. The relation wherein christians stand to Christ, and one another. Every christian is a member of his body, and every other christian stands related to him as a fellow-member, ver. 27. All have relation to one another, dependence upon one another, and should have mutual care. Thus are members of the natural body, and thus should the members of the mystical body be disposed. Mutual indifference, contempt, hatred, envy, and strife, are very unnatural in christians. It is like the members of the same body being destitute of concern for one another, or quarrelling with each other. This was to suppress the proud and contentious spirit, that prevailed as to spiritual gifts.

2. The variety of offices instituted by Christ, and the gifts or favours dispensed by him, ver. 28. God hath set some in the church; First, apostles, the chief ministers intrusted with all the powers

necessary to found a church, and make an entire revelation of God's holy will. Secondly, prophets, or persons enabled by inspiration to prophesy, interpret scripture, or write by inspiration, as the evangelists. Thirdly, teachers, those who labour in word and doctrine, whether with pastoral charge, or without it. After that, miracles, or miracle-workers. Then gifts of healing, or those who had power to heal diseases. Helps, or such as ministered to the sick and weak. Governments, such as had disposal of the charitable contributions of the church, and dealt them out to the poor, or presided in and managed the secular affairs of the church. Diversities of tongues, such as could speak divers languages.

Observe these offices and gifts. God does, and we should, value things according to their real worth; and those are most valuable that best answer the highest purposes. What holds the last and lowest rank in this enumeration, is, diversity of tongues. It is by itself the least useful and the most insignificant of all these gifts. Healing diseases, relieving the poor, helping the sick, have their use: but how vain a thing is it to speak languages, if a man does it merely to amuse or to exalt himself! This may raise the admiration, but cannot promote the edification, of the hearers, or do them any good. Yet it is manifest, from chap. 14, that the Corinthians valued themselves exceedingly on this gift. To beat down pride, let persons know the true value of what they pride themselves in! It is too common for men to value themselves most on what is least worth. See the distribution of these various gifts, not to every one alike, ver. 29, 30. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? This were to make the church all one, as if the body were all ear or all eye. The Spirit distributes to every one as he will. We must be content though lower and less than others. We must not be conceited and despise others, if we are in the higher rank, and have greater gifts. Every member of the body is to preserve its own rank, and do its own office; and all are to minister to one another, and promote the good of the body without envying, despising, neglecting, or ill-using any particular member. How blessed the christian church, if all the members did their duty!

This chapter closes with advice to covet

the best gifts, either the most valuable in themselves, or those most serviceable to others. Though men may esteem those gifts most that will raise their fame and esteem highest, those truly are best by which God will be most honoured, and his church edified: Such gifts should be most earnestly coveted. We should desire that most, which is best, and most worth. Grace is therefore to be preferred before gifts, and of gifts those are to be preferred which are of greatest use. Gifts may be valued for their use, but they are mischievous when made the fuel of pride and contention. This also the apostle endeavours to prevent, by giving the hint of a more excellent way, that is, of charity, of mutual love and good-will. This was the only right way to make their gifts turn to the advantage and edification of the church. This would render them kind and concerned for each other, and therefore calm their spirits, and put an end to piques and contests, and disputes about precedence. Those would appear in the foremost rank, according to the apostle, who had most of true christian love. True charity is greatly to be preferred to the most glorious gifts. To have the heart glow with mutual love, is vastly better than to shine with the most pompous titles, offices, or powers. Instead of unduly coveting the highest stations, or the most conspicuous gifts, let us leave the appointment of his instruments to God, and those whom he works in by his providence, remembering that men will not be applauded hereafter who affect the chief places, but those who are most faithful to the trust reposed in them, and most diligent in their Master's work.

28. There is a difficulty in ascertaining the meaning of some of these offices, their specific differences, and relative importance; especially whether they were all vested in distinct persons, or if several of them were exercised by the same individual. Nor is it clearly decided if all the offices here enumerated were extraordinary, and connected with the possession of supernatural gifts; or if some of them were meant to be permanent in the church; or whether they are enumerated according to their relative importance, and whether they answer to the classification of gifts given in ver. 8—10.—*Lothian*.

CHAPTER XIII.

The apostle shows the necessity and advantage of the grace of love, without which all spiritual gifts, all external acts of liberality, and even courage for martyrdom it-

self, will not profit us, ver. 1—3. He represents its excellency, by its properties and effects, 4—7; and by its abiding, after all gifts for edification shall cease, also by its superiority to faith and hope, 8—13.

Ver. 1—3. Here the apostle shows the excellent way he meant, or had in view, in the close of the former chapter, that is, charity, or, as it is commonly elsewhere rendered, love. Not what is meant by charity in our common use of the word, alms-giving, but love in its fullest and most extensive meaning; true love to God and man; a benevolent disposition of mind towards our fellow-christians, growing out of sincere and fervent devotion to God. This living principle of all duty and obedience is the more excellent way of which the apostle speaks: preferable to all gifts. And without this the most glorious gifts are nothing, of no account to us, of no esteem in the sight of God. Here is specified,

1. The gift of tongues, ver. 1. Could a man speak all the languages on earth, and that with the greatest propriety, elegance, or fluency; could he talk like an angel, and yet be without charity, it would be all empty noise, mere useless sound. It is not talking freely, or finely, or learnedly, of the things of God, that will save us, or profit others, if we are destitute of holy love. It is the heart, not the tongue, that is acceptable with God. The apostle specifies first this gift; hereupon the Corinthians seemed chiefly to value themselves, and despise their brethren.

2. Prophecy, and the understanding of mysteries, and all knowledge, ver. 2. Had a man the clearest understanding of the prophecies and types under the old dispensation, the most accurate knowledge of the doctrine of christianity, and thus by inspiration, from the infallible dictates and illumination of the Spirit of God, yet without charity he would be nothing. A clear head and a deep understanding, is of no value, without a benevolent and charitable heart.

3. The faith of miracles, or the faith by which persons were enabled to work miracles; Had I all faith. Even the most wonder-working faith, to which nothing is, in a manner, impossible, is nothing without charity. Those may do many wondrous works in Christ's name, whom yet he will disown, and bid depart from him, as workers of iniquity

Matt. 7. 22, 23. Saving faith is ever united with charity, but the faith of miracles may be without it.

4. The outward works of charity, ver. 3. Should all a man has be laid out in this manner, yet if he had no christian love, it would profit nothing. There may be an open and lavish hand, where there is no liberal and charitable heart. Vain-glorious ostentation, or proud conceit of merit, may put a man to large expense this way, who has no true love to God or men. Doing good to others will do none to us, if it be not done from a principle of devotion and charity, love to God, and good-will to men. If we give away all we have, while we withhold the heart from God, it will not profit.

5. Even sufferings, and those of the most grievous kind. Should we sacrifice our lives for the faith of the gospel, and be burned to death in maintenance of its truth, this will stand us in no stead, unless we are animated to these sufferings by true devotion to God, and sincere love to his church and people, and good-will to mankind. The outward conduct may be plausible, when the inward principle is very bad. The most grievous sufferings, the most costly sacrifices, will not recommend us to God, if we do not love the brethren; should we give our own bodies to be burned, it would not profit. How strange the idea of recommending themselves to God, of those who hope to do it by burning others, by murdering and massacring, and tormenting their fellow-christians, or by injurious usage of them! And how are they deluded who expect acceptance and reward for their good works, which are as scanty in degree, as they are corrupt and selfish in principle.

Ver. 4—7. The apostle gives in these verses some of the properties and effects of charity, that we may know whether we have this grace; and that if we have not, we may not rest till we have obtained it. This love is unequivocal evidence of regeneration, and is a touchstone of our professed faith in Christ. It is plain that the apostle meant in this beautiful description of the properties and effects of love, to show the Corinthians that their conduct had, in many respects, been an entire contrast to it.

1. It is long-suffering. It can endure

evil, injury, and provocation, without resentment, indignation, or revenge. It makes the mind firm, gives power over the angry passions, and furnishes a persevering patience, that shall rather wait and wish the reformation of a brother, than resent his conduct. It will put up with many slights and neglects from the person it loves, and wait long to see the kindly effects of such patience on him.

2. It is kind. It is benign, bountiful; it is courteous and obliging. It seeks to be useful; and not only seizes on opportunities of doing good, but searches for them. This is the general character. Patient under injuries, and apt and inclined to do all good offices in its power. Under these two generals all particulars of the character may be reduced.

3. Charity suppresses envy. It is not grieved at the gifts or good qualities, honours or estates, of others. If we love our neighbour, so far from envying his welfare, we shall rejoice at it. His satisfaction will be an addition to ours, instead of impairing or lessening it. The prosperity of those to whom we wish well, never can grieve us; and the mind bent on doing good to all, never can wish ill to any.

4. Charity subdues pride and vain-glory; is not puffed with self-conceit. does not arrogate to itself honour, or power, or respect, which do not belong to it. It is not insolent, apt to despise others; to treat them with contempt and scorn. Those animated with a principle of true brotherly love, will in honour prefer one another, Rom. 12. 10. They will do nothing out of a spirit of contention, or vain-glory, Phil. 2. 3. True love will lead us to esteem our brethren, and raise our regard for them; and this will limit our esteem of ourselves, and prevent self-conceit and arrogance. Charity calms the angry passions, instead of raising them. It is not forward nor stubborn and untractable. Charity abhors falsehood and flattery.

5. Charity behaves not unseemly. It does nothing indecorous, nothing out of place or time; but behaves towards all men, as becomes their rank and ours; with reverence and respect to superiors, with kindness and condescension to inferiors, with courtesy and good-will towards all men. It is not for breaking order, confounding ranks, or bringing all men on a level; but for

keeping up the distinctions God has made between men, and acting in its own station, and minding its own business, without taking upon it to censure, or despise others.

6. Charity is an utter enemy to selfishness; seeks not its own; does not desire or seek its own praise, or honour or profit, or pleasure. The apostle does not mean, that charity destroys all regard to ourselves, that the charitable man should neglect himself and all his interests. But charity never seeks its own to the hurt of others, or with the neglect of others. Many times it neglects its own for the sake of others; prefers their welfare, and satisfaction, and advantage, to its own; and ever prefers the welfare of others to its private advantage.

7. It tempers and restrains the passions, is not exasperated. It corrects sharpness of temper, sweetness and softens the mind, so that it does not suddenly conceive, or long continue, a vehement passion. Anger cannot rest in the bosom where love reigns. It is hard to be angry with those we love, but easy to drop resentment, and be reconciled.

8. Charity thinks no evil. It is not soon, nor long, angry; it is never inclined to revenge; does not suspect evil of others, it does not charge guilt upon them by inference, when nothing of the sort openly appears. True love never will indulge suspicion without proof, but rather will incline to disbelieve evidence against the person it affects. It will never be forward to suspect ill, and reason itself into a bad opinion upon mere appearances, or to give way to suspicion without any grounds. It will not put the worst construction upon any thing.

9. The matter of its joy and pleasure is here suggested. It rejoices not in iniquity; it takes no pleasure in doing injury or hurt to any; it thinks not evil of any, without clear proof, it wishes ill to none; much less will it hurt or wrong any; and least of all rejoice in doing harm and mischief. It is not gratified with the report of men's vices and follies. The sins of others are the grief of charitable people, exciting their compassion, but they give no encouragement to evil. It is the very height of malice, to take pleasure in the misery of a fellow-creature. And is not falling into sin the greatest calamity that can befall any one? How inconsistent with chris-

tian charity, to rejoice at such a fall! It rejoices in the truth; is glad of the success of the gospel; and rejoices to see men moulded into an evangelical temper. It takes no pleasure in sin, but is highly delighted to see any do well. It rejoices to see truth and justice prevail, to see piety and true religion flourish.

10. It beareth all things, it endureth all things. The original also signifies, it covereth all things. Charity will cover a multitude of sins, 1 Pet. 4. 8. It will draw a veil over them as far as it can consistently with duty. Though such a man be free to tell his brother his faults in private, he is very unwilling to expose him by making them public. Thus we do by our own faults, and thus charity would teach us to do by the faults of others. Oh, it beareth all things; will pass by and put up with injuries, without indulging anger, or cherishing revenge; will be patient upon provocation, and long patient; will hold firm, though it be borne hard upon. What fortitude and firmness fervent love will give the mind! How many slights and injuries will it put up with! How many hazards will it run, and how many difficulties will it encounter!

11. Charity believes, and hopes well of others. Charity by no means destroys prudence, nor out of mere simplicity believes every word, Prov. 14. 15. Wisdom must dwell with love, and charity be cautious. But it is ready to think well of all, when there is no appearance to the contrary. All charity is full of candour, willing to make the best of every thing. And when it can no longer believe well of others, it will not presently conclude a case desperate, but wishes the amendment of the worst of men. It hopes for the conversion of the sinner, and the recovery of the backslider. How good-natured and amiable is christian charity! How lovely the mind that is tinctured throughout with benevolence. How lovely would christianity appear to the world, if those who profess it were more actuated and animated by this Divine principle, and paid due regard to a command on which its blessed Author laid the chief stress! A new commandment give I to you, that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another, John 13. 34. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, ver. 35. Blessed Jesus! how few of thy professed disci-

ples are distinguished and marked out by this characteristic!

Let us then inquire whether this Divine love dwells in our hearts. Has this principle guided us into becoming behaviour to all men? Are we willing to relinquish selfish objects and aims? If some sparks of this heavenly flame have been kindled in our hearts, still there is much of a contrary nature. Here, then, is a call to watchfulness, diligence and prayer.

Ver. 8-13. The apostle shows how much preferable charity is to the gifts on which the Corinthians prided themselves. From its longer continuance and duration; Charity never faileth. It is a permanent and perpetual grace, lasting as eternity; but the extraordinary gifts on which the Corinthians valued themselves, were of short continuance. They were only to edify the church on earth, and that for a time; but in heaven would be all superseded, which yet is the very seat and element of love. Prophecy must fail, both the prediction of things to come, and the interpretation of scripture. Tongues will cease, that is, the miraculous power of speaking languages without learning them. There will be but one language in heaven. There is no confusion of tongues in the region of perfect tranquillity. And knowledge will vanish away. That philosophical knowledge on which the Corinthians prided themselves would soon vanish as a dream, and even that religious knowledge which is acquired on earth, will be extinguished by the perfect knowledge of heaven. The light of a candle is quite obscured by the sun shining in its strength. These gifts are adapted only to a state of imperfection, ver. 9. Our best knowledge and our greatest abilities are at present like our condition, narrow and temporary. Even the knowledge had by inspiration was but in part. How little a portion of God, and the unseen world, was known even by apostles and inspired men! How very short do others come of them! But these gifts were fitted to the imperfect state of the church, valuable in themselves, but not to be compared with charity, which was to last for ever.

Hence is shown how much better it will be with the church hereafter, ver. 10. When that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done

away. When the end is once attained, the means will be abolished. There will be no need of tongues, and prophecy, and inspired knowledge, in a future life; then the church will be complete both in knowledge and holiness. The difference is pointed out in two particulars; 1. The present state is a state of childhood, the future that of manhood. Such is the difference between earth and heaven. What narrow views, what confused and indistinct notions of things, have children in comparison with grown men! And how naturally do men, when reason is matured, despise and put their infant thoughts away! Thus shall we think of our most valued gifts and acquisitions of this world, when we come to heaven. 2. Things are dark and confused now in comparison of what they will be hereafter. They can only be seen as by the imperfect reflection of a mirror, or in the obscure description of a riddle. Now we can only discern things at a great distance, and involved in clouds and obscurity; but hereafter our knowledge will be free from all obscurity and error. God is to be seen face to face; we are to know him, as we are known by him; not as perfectly, but in sense in the same manner. We shall then see him as he is, 1 John 3. 2. We shall know how we are known, enter into the mysteries of Divine love and grace. O glorious change! to pass from darkness to light, from clouds to the clear sunshine of our Saviour's face, and in God's own light to see light! Ps. 36. 9. It is the light of heaven only, that will remove all clouds and darkness from the face of God. It is at best but twilight while we are in this world. In heaven will be perfect and eternal day.

To sum up the excellences of charity, it is preferred not only to gifts, but to other graces, to faith and hope, ver. 13. True grace is much more excellent than any spiritual gifts whatever. And faith, hope, and love are the three principal graces, of which charity is the chief, being the end to which the other two are but means. This abides and must abide, as essential to godliness under every revelation. Faith fixes on the Divine revelation, and assents to that, relying on the Divine Redeemer. Hope fastens on future happiness, and waits for that; and in heaven, faith will be swallowed up in vision, and hope in

fruition. There is no room to believe and hope, when we see and enjoy. But love fastens on the Divine perfections themselves, and the Divine image in the creatures, and our mutual relation both to God and them. These will shine forth in the most glorious splendour in another world, and there love will be made perfect. There we shall perfectly love God, because he will appear perfectly amiable for ever, and our hearts will kindle at the sight, and glow with perpetual devotion. And there shall we perfectly love one another, when all the saints meet there, when none but saints are there, and saints made perfect. Blessed state! How much surpassing the best below! O amiable and excellent grace of charity! How much does it exceed the most valuable gift, when it outshines every grace, and is their everlasting completion! When faith and hope are at an end, true charity will burn for ever with the brightest flame. Those border most upon the heavenly state and perfection, whose hearts are fullest of this Divine principle, and burn with the most fervent charity. It is the surest offspring of God, and bears his fairest impression. For God is Love. 1 John 4. 8, 16. And where God is to be seen as he is, and face to face, there charity is in its greatest height; there, and there only, will it be perfected.

Let us then put away the childish things which amused us in an unconverted state. Let us cease from childish disputes about mere externals and non-essentials, seeking an increase of faith, hope, and love, from the Giver of all good gifts. And while we contend that faith alone can justify the sinner, by forming his relation to the Saviour; and that hope alone can support the soul amidst all the trials of life and death; let us still remember that christian love is greater than these needful graces! being the evidence of our title to eternal life, and the fitness for, and earnest of that holy and unspeakable happiness.

12. "By means of a mirror." Telescopes are a late invention. The ancient mirrors were of polished metal, and at best reflected only an obscure and imperfect image. There seems here to be a double allusion, both to an object as reflected, and to a riddle or enigma, which is an obscure way of representing things to the understanding.

13. Faith receives the promises of God as true, and is the appointed medium of justification. Hope, as an anchor of the soul, keeps it

steadfast amidst all the storms and temptations of life—but the exercise of faith and hope is limited to the present imperfect state; the one shall be exchanged for sight, and the other shall be swallowed up in fruition. Love is superior to both, as the end is greater than the means; as that which is unchangeable is superior to that which is transitory.—*Lathian*.

—It is consolatory to us who live in a period in which the extraordinary dispensations of the Holy Spirit are no longer communicated, to observe how St. Paul, who was himself rich in those mysterious treasures, directly asserts the far superior value of the practical christian virtues, to the more ostentatious gifts of miracles and languages.—*Shuttleworth*.

CHAPTER XIV.

The apostle recommends such spiritual gifts as are suited to answer the purposes of christian love for the edification of others, and prefers prophecy to the gift of tongues, ver. 1—5. He illustrates the unprofitableness of speaking in unknown languages, without interpreting them, 6—14. Exhorts to an intelligent worship, that may be profitable to others, as well as ourselves, 15—20. Shows the proper use of the gift of tongues, and the greater advantage of prophesying, 21—25. Reproves and regulates disorder, which arose in religious assemblies, from vain ostentation of gifts, 26—33. And from women's speaking in the church, 34—40.

Ver. 1—5. The apostle had recommended christian charity above all spiritual gifts. Here he teaches them among spiritual gifts which they should prefer. He begins with an exhortation to charity, ver. 1. Follow after charity, pursue it, have an earnest concern to obtain this excellent disposition of mind, whatever pains or prayers it may cost. While they made this christian disposition their chief pursuit, they might be desirous of spiritual gifts, but especially of prophesying, that is, of interpreting scripture. He assigns the reasons of this preference. He compares prophesying with speaking with tongues, which it seems was the gift on which the Corinthians principally valued themselves. This was more ostentatious than the plain interpretation of scripture; more fit to gratify pride, but less fit to promote the purposes of christian charity; it would not equally do good to the souls of men. For he that spake with tongues must wholly speak between God and himself; for whatever might be communicated in his language, none of his own countrymen could understand, ver. 2. What cannot

be understood, never can edify. No advantage can be reaped from the most excellent discourses, if delivered in unintelligible language, such as the audience can neither speak nor understand. He that is most edified himself, is most likely to do good to others, by what he speaks; but he that speaks with tongues in an unknown language, can only edify himself. That is the best and most eligible gift, which does most good; not that which can edify ourselves only. Greater is he who interprets scripture to edify the church, than he who speaks tongues to recommend himself. And what other end he who spake with tongues could have, unless he interpreted what he spake, is not easy to see. That makes most for the honour of a minister, which is most for the edification of the church, not that which shows his gifts to most advantage. Every endowment or possession is valuable in proportion to its usefulness; and all public ordinances should be so conducted as they may tend to the edification, exhortation, and consolation of believers, and the conversion of sinners. Even fervent spiritual affection must be governed by the exercise of the understanding, or else men will disgrace the truths they profess to promote.

1—3. *Gilpin* paraphrases thus:—As far then as you act under the influence of this great principle of christian charity, you may desire spiritual gifts; but I should wish you chiefly to expound and instruct. For he who speaketh in an unknown tongue, may speak indeed to God; but speaketh in vain to his hearers: while he who expounds scripture, edifies, exhorts, and comforts all who hear him, and spreads knowledge abroad in the church.

2 *Lightfoot* thinks that the tongue principally intended by the apostle, was the Hebrew, which for a long time past was gone into disuse, but now restored by the gift of tongues. And that the persons to whom the apostle refers, judaized in this matter, and retained the use of the Hebrew tongue in the church, though unknown to the people, following the custom of the synagogue.

Ver. 6—14. Even an apostle could not edify, unless he spake to the capacity of his hearers. New revelations, the most clear explications of old ones, the most instructive discourses in themselves, would be unprofitable in a language not understood. This is illustrated by allusions. To a pipe or harp playing always in one tone. If there be no distinction of sounds, of what service is it? To a trumpet giving an uncertain sound;

not the proper sound for the purpose, or not distinct enough to be discerned from every other sound. To speak words that have no significancy to those who hear them, is speaking into the air, ver. 9. There are many kinds of voices in the world, none of which are without their proper signification, ver. 10. This is true of the several languages spoken by several nations. That cannot answer the end of speaking, which has no meaning. But in this case, speaker and hearers are barbarians to each other, ver. 11. They talk and hear only sounds without sense. To speak in the church in an unknown tongue, is to confound the audience, instead of instructing them; and for this reason utterly vain and unprofitable.

The apostle advises to desire gifts most for the edification of the church, ver. 12, those gifts that will do the best service to men's souls. If they did speak a foreign language, they should beg of God the gift of interpreting it, ver. 13. The sum is, that they should perform all religious exercises in their assemblies, so that all might join in them, and profit by them. A man's spirit might pray, that is, a spiritual gift may be exercised in prayer, or his own mind might be devoutly engaged; but his understanding would be unfruitful, ver. 14. It should be the concern of such as pray in public, to pray intelligibly, not in a foreign language, nor in a language above the level of the audience. Language most obvious and easy to be understood, is the most proper for public worship, and other religious exercises.

What shall I profit? or, How shall I be profited? are proper inquiries when we are considering how to conduct our meeting together for religious exercises. For want of this, many, even in delivering an eloquent discourse, are more unmeaning than things without life giving sound. While we speak against prayers and worship in an unknown tongue, and are thankful for being delivered from such a system, are there not many who use the common language of their country, who yet employ such phrases, choose such words, and enter into such discussions as to be scarcely if at all understood by most hearers? Surely every true follower of Christ will rather desire to do good to others, than to obtain a name for eloquence or learning.

6. "What good shall I do you, unless I shall

speak to you intelligibly, either by the revelation peculiar to an apostle, or by the word of knowledge, the gift of a superior prophet, or by prophecy, the inspiration proper to an inferior prophet; or by doctrine, the inspiration proper to the ordinary pastor?"—*Macknight*.

13. "Let him pray, that he may likewise be able to interpret what he says."—*Bloomfield*.

Ver. 15—20. The apostle does not forbid praying or singing when they had a spiritual gift communicated to them; but would have them perform both, so that others might join with them. Otherwise the unlearned could not join in the worship, ver. 16. How could the body of the people declare their consent and concurrence to prayers in an unknown tongue? This is saying Amen, So be it, God grant the thing we have requested; or, We join in the confession that has been made of sin, and in the acknowledgment that has been made of Divine mercies and favours. This is the import of saying Amen. There can be no concurrence in prayers that are not understood. The apostle did not come behind any in this spiritual gift, ver. 18. It was not envy that made the apostle depreciate what they valued. He spoke more languages than they all. Yet he had rather speak five intelligible words, to benefit others, than make ten thousand fine discourses, that would do no one else any good because they did not understand them. A truly christian minister will value himself much more upon doing a small spiritual good to men's souls, than upon procuring the greatest applause and commendation to himself. This is true grandeur and nobleness of spirit; it is acting up to his character; approving himself the servant of Christ.

The fondness for this gift plainly indicated the defects of their judgment, ver. 20. Children are apt to be struck with novelty: do not act like them, and prefer noise and show to worth and substance. In this passage is a double rebuke, both of pride on account of gifts, and arrogance and haughtiness towards each other, and the contests and quarrels proceeding from them. Christians should be as children, void of guile and malice; but they should not be unskilful in the word of righteousness, Heb. 5. 13, though they should be unskilful in the arts of mischief. Whether we offer prayer, sing praises to God, or thank him for his mercies, we should unite

spiritual affections with sober judgment, and those who lead in social worship, should use language which may affect and instruct the meekest fellow-worshipper, and enable him to add a cordial Amen, to what is spoken.

Ver. 21—25. Tongues, as the Corinthians used them, were rather a token of judgment from God, than of mercy, ver. 21. In the law, that is, the Old Testament, it is written, With men of other tongues and other lips will I speak to this people; and yet for all that will they not hear me, saith the Lord, Isa. 28. 11. Compare Deut. 28. 46, 49. To both these places, it is thought, the apostle refers. Both are delivered by way of threatening, and one is supposed to interpret the other. It is evidence that a people are abandoned of God, when he gives them up to the discipline of those who speak in another language. The apostle implies, You should not be fond of the tokens of Divine displeasure. They can never be benefited by such teaching; and when left to it, it is a sad sign that God leaves them to themselves. And should christians covet to be in such a state, or bring the churches into it? Yet thus the preachers did who delivered their inspirations in an unknown tongue.

Tongues were rather a sign to unbelievers than to believers, ver. 22. The gift of tongues tended to convince unbelievers of the doctrine christians had embraced; but prophesying, and interpreting scripture in their own language, were most for the edification of those who already believed, so that speaking with tongues in christian assemblies, was altogether out of time and place. That gifts may be rightly used, it is proper to know the ends they are intended to serve. If when they were all assembled for christian worship, their ministers, employed in public worship, should talk unintelligible language, and infidels should come in, they would conclude them to be wild fanatics. Would it not make christianity ridiculous to a heathen, to hear the ministers pray, or preach, or perform any religious exercise, in a language which neither he nor the assembly understood? They disgrace their religion, and degrade their own character, who do any thing that has this aspect. But if those who minister,

plainly interpret scripture, or preach the great truths and rules of the gospel, in language intelligible and proper, a hearer, then or unlearned person coming in, would, probably be convinced, and might become a convert to christianity, ver. 24, 25. His conscience will be touched, the secrets of his heart will be revealed to him, he will be condemned by the truths he hears, and so will be brought to confess his guilt, and to own that God is present in the assembly. Scripture-truth, plainly and duly taught, has marvellous fitness to awaken the conscience and touch the heart. Religious exercises in christian assemblies should be such as are fit to edify the faithful, and convince, affect, and convert unbelievers. The ministry was not instituted to make ostentation of gifts and parts, but to save souls.

And though religious ordinances should be directed for the edification of believers, yet care should be taken not to send away occasional hearers confirmed in prejudices against the truth, and disposed to ridicule it. But when the word of God is spoken with address, both to the understanding and the affections, and with close application to the conscience, the very secrets of the heart often seem to be disclosed by the experimental address of the preacher, and the hearers are induced to join the worship they before despised.

23. *Gilpin* paraphrases thus, What think you would an unbeliever suppose, who should enter your assemblies, and find a person talking to the congregation in a language which none of them understood? It would make him suppose you were rather mad than inspired. But if he should hear any of your teachers expounding, a different effect might then be produced. He might see his error; his conscience might take alarm; and falling down on his knees he might worship God among you.

25. "Among you."—*Scholefield*.

Ver. 26—33. The apostle reproves the Corinthians for the confusion they introduced into their assemblies. When they came together, all endowed with gifts were eager to seize the opportunity of exercising them. Thus several would be speaking at the same time, and the great end of their coming together would be overlooked. Religious exercises in public assemblies should have this view—let all be done to edifying.

As to the speaking in an unknown tongue, the apostle directs that no more

than two or three should do it at one meeting, and this not all together, but successively, one after another. And even this was not to be done, unless there were some interpreter beside him who spake; for to speak in an unknown tongue, what himself was afterward to interpret, could only be for ostentation. But if another were present, who could interpret, two miraculous gifts might be exercised at once, and thereby the church be edified, and the faith of the hearers confirmed at the same time. But if there were none to interpret, he was only to exercise his gift between God and himself, and solitary devotions are out of time and place, when the church is met for social worship. As to prophesying, two or three only should speak at one meeting, ver. 29, and this successively, not all at once; and the others should discern and determine whether it were of Divine inspiration or not. There might be false prophets, mere pretenders to Divine inspiration; and the true prophets were to judge of these. If any prophet had a revelation, while another was prophesying, the other should be silent, ver. 30, before the inspired assistant uttered his revelation. The reason, ver. 31, is, that all might prophesy, one by one, or one after another. The apostle adds, The spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets, ver. 32, the spiritual gifts on their minds when most powerfully influenced by the Holy Spirit, leave them possessed of their reason. Divine inspirations are not like the diabolical possessions of heathen priests, ungovernable, and prompting them to act as if beside themselves; but are sober, calm, and capable of regular guidance. The man who is inspired by the Spirit of God will observe order and decency in delivering his revelations.

These regulations would be for the people's benefit, their instruction and consolation. God instituted the ministry for the instruction, edification, and comfort of the church, and surely ministers should fit their ministrations to these purposes. God is the God of peace, and good order, ver. 33; therefore Divine inspirations should by no means throw christian assemblies into confusion. If managed in a tumultuous and confused manner, what notion must this give to considerate observers of the God who is worshipped? Does

it look as if he were the God of peace and order, and an enemy to confusion? Things should be so managed in Divine worship, that no unlovely or dishonourable notion of God be formed in the minds of observers. Affairs were thus managed in other churches, ver. 33, which was a manifest proof that the church of Corinth might do the same. God never teaches men to neglect their relative duties, to act unbecoming their age and station, or inconsistently with decency and regularity; but in all things we are to follow regulations, suited to render the worship and conduct of his people respectable before men, and honourable to him.

27. *Shuttleworth* considers that the apostle here recommends that after two or three sentences had been uttered in an unknown tongue, there should be a pause till they were interpreted. This was the plan adopted in the Jewish synagogues after the return from captivity; when the portions of the Hebrew scriptures were read, they were rendered into Chaldee. See *Prideaux*.

29. "Let the rest judge."—*Schotefeld*.

Ver. 34, 35. To reconcile ver. 34, 35, with ch. 11. 3—16, we may consider that some Corinthian women used to speak publicly when not under the impulse of the Holy Spirit; perhaps they interrupted other speakers, according to the disputatious temper which then prevailed. The apostle lays down a general rule, that they were not to speak in the public congregation, or to assume the office of teachers; for this was by no means consistent with the obedience to their husbands, taught by the Divine law. If there was anything in the public instructions which they could not understand, let them wait till they returned home, and then let them ask their husbands about it, who were to be supposed able and willing to inform them, and who were the most proper persons for them to confer with; for it was not proper for women to make a practice of discoursing in the public assemblies.

When the apostle exhorts Christian women to seek information on religious subjects from their husbands at home, is it not supposed that believing families will be assembled for reviewing the doctrines they have heard, and for promoting spiritual knowledge? Let parents examine the progress of their children, especially on the Lord's day, and en-

courage all the members of their family to inquire the meaning of those truths which appear dark or obscure to them. See Deut. 6. 6, 7.—(87.)

34. *Guyse* refers to the case of Anna, Luke 2. 38, and Philip's four daughters, Acts 21. 9, with the mention of the outpouring of the Spirit upon hand-maidens, Acts 2. 16—18, and thinks that the apostle did not mean absolutely to disallow of women's speaking in the church, when they evidently appeared to be under a Divine affluence; but that there were women at Corinth who pretended to speak under immediate inspiration though they were not really inspired; and that he here without limitation, forbids their speaking in the church in any way peculiar to the office of men.

—*Olpin* supposes this injunction was meant to forbid women to ask questions publicly, and to raise difficulties and scruples which would disturb the congregation.

Ver. 36—40. The apostle closes this subject with a just rebuke of the Corinthians for their pride and self-conceit, ver. 36. Did christianity come out of Corinth; was its origin among you? If not, is it now limited and confined to you? Those must be reproved and humbled, whose spiritual pride and self-conceit throw Christian churches and assemblies into confusion. What he had said was the command of God; nor durst any one, really inspired, deny it, ver. 37. If any man think himself a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge, let him be tried by this very rule. If he will not own what is delivered on this head to be the will of Christ, he himself never had the Spirit of Christ. The Spirit of Christ can never contradict itself; if it speak in him, and in them, it must speak the same things in both. If their revelations contradict those of the apostle, they do not come from the same Spirit. By this therefore you may know them.

He sums up all. 1. Though they should not despise the gift of tongues, nor altogether disuse it, yet prophesying was the more useful gift. 2. He charges them to let all things be done decently and in order; that they should avoid every thing disorderly. To do otherwise was to destroy the end of Christian assemblies. God is not to be dishonoured, nor his worship disgraced, by unbecoming and disorderly performance of it, and attendance at it. But let us most desire that grace which sanctifies and humbles the soul, and so prepares it for heavenly happiness.

The way to preserve peace, truth, and discipline in the church, is to seek that

which is advantageous to it, to bear with that which is not prejudicial to its welfare, and to love and keep up therein good behaviour, order, decency, and subordination.—(94.)

37. "If any man is accounted,"—*Bloomfield*.

* Though the gift of tongues has ceased among us, this chapter is an admirable piece of instruction to the clergy of any country. What matters it though they speak neither in greek nor in latin, if they treat subjects, or use words and phrases which the people do not understand? And if they do this to show their parts and learning, they fall directly into the fault which the apostle here reproves, that of ostentatiously displaying their gifts. If they wish to preach for the sake of edifying, they cannot use words of too easy signification.—*Gelpin*.

CHAPTER XV.

The apostle proves the resurrection of Christ from the dead, ver. 1—11. Takes occasion from thence to confute those that denied the resurrection of the body, 12—19. Establishes the doctrine of the resurrection of believers to eternal life, by various arguments, 20—31. Answers objections against it, and shows the vast change that will be then made in the qualities of the risen bodies, 35—50. Discovers the mystery of the like change that will be then made on those who shall be living at Christ's second coming, 51—54. Sets forth the believer's triumph over death and the grave, 55—57. And closes the argument with an exhortation and encouragement to all diligence in the service of the Lord, 58.

Ver. 1—11. The subject of this chapter is the future existence of man. The word commonly rendered resurrection, usually denotes our existence beyond the grave. There appears to have been a teacher in the Corinthian church who refused submission to the authority of the apostle. This man seems to have been a jew, probably a sadducee, and to have brought over several to the sadducean error, denial of a future state. To remove this error from that church, and to prevent its existence afterwards, evidently was the design of St. Paul in writing this chapter. Of this doctrine not a trace can be found in all the investigations of philosophy. Paul, when making it known to the athenians, was declared to be a babler. The resurrection was a doctrine unknown or unheard, within the purlieus of science.—(17.)

Yet no doctrine devised by philosophy concerning man, is so sublime, or so

fitted to furnish consolation and hope, to beings whose life in this world is a moment, and whose end is the grave. To that dark and desolate habitation, man, by the twilight of nature, looks forward in despair as his final home. All who have gone before him have pointed their feet to its silent chambers, and not one has returned to announce that an opening has been discovered to a more lightsome and desirable region. His own feet tread the same melancholy path. As he draws nigh, no lamp illumines the darkness within. No crevice opens to the eye a glimpse of the regions which lie beyond. Philosophy has no consolations for herself, and can administer none to him. "Here," she coldly and sullenly cries, "is the end of man. From nothing he sprang: to nothing he returns. All that remains of him is the dust, which here mingles with its native earth." But revelation approaches and exclaims, "Lazarus, come forth." In a moment the earth heaves, the tomb uncloses, and a form, bright as the sun, and arrayed in immortality, rises from the earth, and stretching its wings towards heaven, escapes from the astonished sight.—(17.)

Such is the result from the view of the resurrection which this chapter presents. Nothing in heathen antiquity can be found which deserves to be named in comparison with this discourse. From the first proposing of the subject the writer begins to ascend, and rises higher and higher till he lifts himself, and elevates others to the heavens.—(17.)

The apostle begins with a summary of the gospel; what he had preached among them, namely, the death and resurrection of Christ. Upon this foundation the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead is built. Divine truths appear with greatest evidence, when looked upon in their mutual connexion. The doctrine which Paul had heretofore taught, he still taught. It was what they had received; they had been convinced of the faith, believed it in their hearts, or at least made profession of doing so. It was that gospel in which, or by which they had stood, and must continue to stand. The doctrine of Christ's death and resurrection is at the foundation of christianity. Remove this foundation, and all our hopes for eternity sink at once. And it is by holding this truth firm.

that christians stand in a day of trial, and are kept faithful to God. It was that alone by which they could hope for salvation, ver. 2; for there is no salvation in any other name; no name is given under heaven, by which we may be saved, but the name of Christ. And the crucifixion of our Redeemer, and his conquest over death, are the source of our spiritual life and hopes. These saving truths of the gospel must be fixed in our minds, revolved much in our thoughts, and maintained and held fast to the end, if we would be saved. We believe in vain, unless we persevere in the faith of the gospel; we shall be never the better for a temporary faith. This gospel on which the apostle lays such stress, was that doctrine which he had received, and delivered to them, as among the first, the principal. It was a most necessary truth, that Christ died for our sins, and was buried, and rose again: that he was offered in sacrifice for our sins; and rose again, to show that he had procured forgiveness for them, and was accepted of God in this offering, Rom. 4. 25.

This truth is confirmed by Old Testament predictions, ver. 4. Also by the testimony of many who saw Christ after he was risen from the dead. How evident was Christ's resurrection from the dead, when so many saw him at so many times alive, and when he indulged the weakness of one disciple so far as to let him touch his body. We have reason to believe those who were steady in maintaining this truth, though they hazarded all that was dear to them in this world. It was one of the peculiar offices of an apostle, to be a witness of our Saviour's resurrection, Luke 24. 48, and when Paul was called to the apostolical office, the Lord Jesus appeared to him in the way to Damascus, Acts 9. 17.

This apostle was highly favoured, but he always had a mean opinion of himself, and expressed it. So he does here, observing, That he was one born out of due time, ver. 8. Paul resembled such a birth, in that he was not matured for the apostolical function. He had not known nor followed the Lord, nor had been formed in his family, as the others. He owns himself the least, because the last of them, called latest to the office, not worthy to be called an apostle, because he had been a persecutor of the

church, ver. 9. A humble spirit, in the midst of high attainments, is a great ornament. And when sinners are by Divine grace turned into saints, God makes the remembrance of former sins serve to make them humble, and diligent, and faithful. He ascribes all that was valuable in him to Divine grace, ver. 10. By God's grace we are what we are. All that is good in us, is a stream from this fountain. Paul was kept humble and thankful by this conviction, so should we be. Nay, though conscious of his own diligence, and zeal, and service, so that he could say of himself, the grace of God was not given him in vain, but he laboured more abundantly than they all, yet he thought himself more the debtor, to Divine grace. A humble spirit is commonly a gracious one. The most eminent christians are always the most humble. The more evidently God has pardoned them, the less will they excuse themselves. Though they cannot be ignorant what the Lord hath done for, in, and by them, yet taking their whole conduct, and their peculiar obligations, they readily conclude that none are so vile and worthless as they are. Earnestly should we desire that the grace bestowed on us may not be in vain, and we should aim to redeem the time which has been lost, remembering to ascribe any good we do, to the grace of God in us.

The apostle not only preached the same gospel himself at all times, and in all places, but all the apostles preached the very same; Whether it were they or I, so we preached, and so ye believed. Whether Peter, or Paul, or any other apostle, had converted them to christianity, all maintained the same truth, preached the same doctrine, and confirmed it by the same evidence. All agreed that Jesus Christ, and him crucified, and slain, and then risen from the dead, was the very sum and substance of christianity: and this all true christians believe. All the apostles agreed in this testimony; all christians agree in the belief of it; by this faith they live, in this faith they die.

1, 2. "Moreover, brethren, I certify you [concerning] the gospel which I preached unto you, (which also ye received, and wherein ye stand, and by which ye are saved.) With what declaration I preached it to you, if you remember, unless ye believed lightly."—*Scholerfield*.

Ver. 12—19. Having confirmed the truth of our Saviour's resurrection, the apostle refutes those among the Corinthians, who said there would be none: ver. 12.. Against this the apostle produces an incontestable fact, the resurrection of Christ; and argues the absurdities that must follow their principle. As,

1. If there be, if there can be, no resurrection of the dead, Christ is not risen, ver. 13, 16. Yet it was foretold in ancient prophecies, that he should rise; and it has been proved by multitudes of eye-witnesses, that he is risen.

2. If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith vain, ver. 14. This would make the faith of christians vain, as well as the labours of ministers. If Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins, ver. 17, yet under the guilt and condemnation of sin, because forgiveness is to be had through his death and sacrifice for sin alone. And had his blood been shed, and his life been taken away, without being restored, what evidence could we have, that through him we should have justification and eternal life? Had he remained under the power of death, how should he have delivered us from its power? He must rise for our justification, who was delivered for our sins, or in vain we look for any such benefit by him. There had been no justification, or salvation, if Christ had not risen. And must not faith in Christ be vain, and of no signification, if he be still among the dead?

Such is and must be the tendency of the tenets of those who profess to believe that Christ is risen, yet deny, explain away, or overlook the great doctrines that relate to the Person, undertaking, and atonement of Christ, and the way of acceptance by faith in him. These doctrines his resurrection especially establishes and proves.

The proof of the resurrection of the body is the resurrection of our Lord. Christ foretold his own resurrection, and he actually rose in the manner predicted. He has thus proved both his power to do every thing, and his truth in all his declarations. But he has declared that he will raise up at the last day all that are in their graves. Thus his own resurrection is a complete proof of the general resurrection of mankind.—(17.)

3. And then those who are fallen asleep in Christ, have perished, ver. 18. If

there be no resurrection, they cannot rise, therefore are lost, even those who have died in the christian faith, and for it. Nay, those who died in the faith had perished in their sins if Christ were not risen, for whatever might be urged for the immortality of the soul on other grounds, there could be no way of forgiveness, acceptance, and eternal life, but through the sacrifice of Christ, which could not be believed where the resurrection was denied. This would show, that Christ's ministers and servants were of all men most miserable, as having hope in him in this life only, ver. 19. All who believe in Christ, have hope in him, as a Redeemer, hope for redemption and salvation by him; but if there be no resurrection, or future recompense, which was intended by those who denied the resurrection at Corinth, their hope in him must be limited to this life. And if all their hopes in Christ lie within the compass of this life, they are in a much worse condition than the rest of mankind, especially at that time, and under those circumstances, in which the apostles wrote; for then they had no protection, but were hated and persecuted by all men. They fared much harder than other men in this life, and yet if there is no resurrection, had no further or better hopes. And can that man have faith in Christ, who believes he will leave his faithful servants in a worse state than his enemies? The christian is crucified to this world, and taught to live upon the hope of another. Carnal pleasures are insipid to him in a great degree: and spiritual and heavenly pleasures are those he seeks and pants after. Christians not only have the hope of future happiness, but have the beginnings, and first fruits of it, in those holy affections towards God, and that joy in him which a stranger intermeddles not with; thus they of all men enjoy the most solid comforts amidst all their difficulties and trials, and even in the times of sharpest persecution.

13. The original and literal meaning of the word "anastasis," rendered resurrection, is, to stand up, or to stand again; it is employed to denote the future state of spirits who are living, conscious, active beings. This will appear from Matt. 22, 23, where our Lord refers, not to a momentary event, as the resurrection, but the future state. The reference to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, shows they were living beings, and proves, that mankind live after death, not after their resurrection, which had not then taken place.—*Dwight*,

Ver. 20—28. In this passage the apostle establishes the truth of the resurrection of the dead, the holy dead, the dead in Christ. Christ is indeed the first-fruits of them that slept, ver. 20. He is truly risen himself, and he is risen in this very character, as the first-fruits of those who sleep, in him. As he is assuredly risen, so in his resurrection there is as much an earnest given, that the dead in him shall rise, as there was, that the Jewish harvest in general should be accepted and blessed, by the offering and acceptance of the first-fruits. All that are by faith united to him, are by his resurrection assured of their own. Even all believers that had died from the beginning, and that should die to the end of the world. He arose as the Representative, the Forerunner of his saints, his resurrection was the assurance of theirs. For since by man came death, **•**by man should come deliverance from it, ver. 21. And so, as in Adam all die, in Christ shall all be made alive. As through the sin of the first Adam all men became mortal, because all derived from him the same sinful nature, so through the resurrection of Christ, shall all who are made to partake of the Spirit, and the spiritual nature, revive, and become immortal. We certainly know that all in Adam die; and it is equally sure that all in Christ shall arise to immortal glory. All, through his undertaking, being placed under a dispensation of mercy, shall be raised from the dead, that their future state may be determined, yet none will be finally benefited but those who are united to Him by faith, and who partake of his life-giving Spirit, and of whom the apostle especially treats in this chapter. Thus it seemed fit to the Divine wisdom, that, as the first Adam ruined his posterity by sin, the Second Adam should raise his seed to a glorious immortality. There will be an order observed in the resurrection. Christ himself has been the first-fruits; hereafter, at his coming, his redeemed people will be raised before others; and at the last the wicked will rise also. Then will be the end of this present state of things, Christ will deliver up the kingdom to God, even to the Father, from whom he received it, having put down all authority and power opposed to his cause. For he must reign till all enemies are subjected to him:

thus it has been foretold, and the scriptures cannot be broken, Ps. 110. Of these enemies death will be the last that is put under the Redeemer's feet, when He has finally delivered all his people from this universal conqueror.

Upon his ascension, Christ was made Head over all things to the church, had power given him to govern and protect it against all enemies, and in the end to destroy them, and complete the salvation of all who believe in him. This is power given for special purposes. And though he who has it, is God, yet, inasmuch as in this whole dispensation he acts not as God, but as Mediator; not as the offended Majesty, but as one interposing in favour of his offending creatures; he may be said to have this power given him: He may reign as God, with power unlimited, and yet may reign as Mediator, with a power limited to these purposes. The distinction between the mediatorial kingdom of Christ, and the absolute, universal, and everlasting kingdom of God, the Governor of all, is every where implied in scripture. Christ, having executed his commission, will cease to reign over all worlds as Mediator, yet he will in human nature retain peculiar authority over his redeemed people; and as one with and equal to the Father, he will, with Him and the Holy Spirit, reign one God over all, blessed for evermore. Nor will he any more cease to reign in this sense when he has given up the mediatorial kingdom, than the Father ceased to reign when he appointed the Son to that kingdom. No doubt, Christ, as man, and in his mediatorial kingdom, always was most perfectly subject to the Godhead, referring all to his honour, and exercising all his authority, "to the glory of God the Father:" but when the grand designs of that kingdom shall be illustriously completed, this shall appear in the most conspicuous manner, and so as far to exceed all our conceptions: and the glory of the Godhead, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, will be displayed and adored in the highest possible degree, ver. 28. And is it not a matter of serious inquiry for us, whether we are now the true disciples of Christ or not? Would we triumph in that solemn and important season, we must now submit to his rule, accept his salvation, and live to his glory. Then shall we rejoice in the

completion of his undertaking, that God may receive the whole glory of our salvation, that we may for ever serve him, and enjoy his favour.

20. Sleeping is a soft term for death, and is most frequently used to express the death of believers, though sometimes of men in general, because the whole human race shall have an akening time. But the death of no other ere times than man is ever described by sleeping, this has a reference to the resurrection of the body.—*Guyse*.

24. "When he shall have destroyed all dominion."—*Scholerfield*.

— Christ's delivering up the kingdom to God the Father, no more proves that he will in all respects cease to be a King, or to have any further reign or dominion, than the Father's delivering the kingdom to the Son proves that the Father himself then ceased to be a King, and parted with his own rule and dominion over all. Nor does it prove that the Son shall have no share with the Father in the government of all things. Thus in ver. 28, God is spoken of without any personal restriction.—*Guyse*.

26. "The last enemy, death, shall be destroyed."—*Macknight*. The sense is equivalent to, "He will subject all his enemies, even, at last, death, the greatest."—*Bloomfield*.

Ver. 29—34. The apostle further argues for the resurrection, ver. 29; What shall they do, who are baptized for the dead, if the dead rise not at all? Why are they baptized for the dead? But what is this baptism for the dead? Who shall interpret this very obscure passage, which, though it consists of three words, has had innumerable senses put on it by interpreters? Into these numerous discussions we need not enter. It has been considered to refer to the case of those who presented themselves for baptism after the martyrdom of their brethren, as if coming forward to supply the places of those who had suffered. Thus they professed their faith in Christ, and encountered the rage of their enemies when others had been put to death for the truth.

Or, What will they be doing, what advantage will they be gaining, who are baptized in the confident expectation of a resurrection of the dead? There seems an allusion] to the profession of faith in the resurrection, demanded of persons about to be baptized.—(75.)

Perhaps baptism is used here in a figurative and metaphorical sense, for afflictions, sufferings, and martyrdom, as Matt. 20. 22, 23. What is, or will become of those who have endured so many and such great injuries and indignities, and have even lost their lives, for asserting this doctrine of the resur-

rection, if the dead rise not at all? How imprudently do they act who continue to follow them, and thus throw away their lives, if the doctrine is not true!—(27.)

Whether either of these is the meaning, or whatever else it may be, doubtless the apostle's argument was understood by the Corinthians. And his next is as plain to us, ver. 30. Why stand we in jeopardy every hour? Why do we expose ourselves to continual peril; we christians, especially apostles? Christianity were a foolish profession, if it proposed no hopes beyond this life, at least in such hazardous times as attended the first profession. Then it would require men to risk all the blessings and comforts of this life, and to face and endure all evils, without any future prospects! This argument the apostle brings home to himself, ver. 31. He was in continual danger of death. To live in daily view and expectation of death, yet have no prospect beyond, must be melancholy. He had encountered great difficulties, and fierce enemies; he had fought with men like beasts at Ephesus, ver. 32, was in danger of being pulled to pieces by an enraged multitude, Acts 19. 28. Now, says he, what advantage have I from such contests, if the dead rise not? If I perish by death, and expect nothing after it, could any thing be more weak? Could any thing but sure hopes of a better life after death, have extinguished the love of life in him? It is very lawful and fit for a christian, to propose advantage to himself by his fidelity to God, and to have our fruit to holiness, that our end may be everlasting life.

Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die, ver. 32. Let us even live like beasts, if we must die like them, if there be no resurrection, no after life, or state. Let us indulge our appetites, and shrink from all hardships, for death at any rate will soon end our pleasures, is the natural inference from a denial of the resurrection. But let none be deceived by the pretences of false teachers, for even a heathen poet could teach them, that such evil communications, or the familiar converse of those who thus taught false and pernicious principles, would corrupt their good manners. Bad company and conversation are likely to make bad men. A companion of fools shall be destroyed, Prov. 13. 20.

The apostle called upon them "to awake righteously," and to become as righteous persons, from the state of indifference, indolence, and false security into which these delusions had thrown them. For while they were so puffed up with the opinion of their superior knowledge, it was very evident that some among them had no humbling, sanctifying, and saving knowledge of God, and their communications corrupted others. Of this they should be ashamed. It must be ignorance of God, that leads to disbelief of a resurrection and future life. Those who know God, know that he will not abandon his faithful servants, leave them exposed to such hardships and sufferings, without any recompense or reward. And atheism is at the root of men's disbelief of a future state. Those who own a God and a providence, and observe how unequal are the distributions of the present life, and how frequently the best men fare worst, cannot doubt an after state, where every thing will be set to rights. Let us venture ourselves on the single testimony of God's word. Let us not associate with sceptical, profligate, or ungodly men; but warn all around us, especially children and young persons, to shun them as a pestilence. Let us awake to righteousness, and not sin. Let us not hearken to those who know not God, in whatever other science they may excel, being assured that ignorance of our Creator, Preserver, and Redeemer, will prove shameful to all in whom it may be found.

29. Of all the numerous interpretations of this verse those mentioned in the comment are generally thought most worthy of notice.

Lightfoot considers that the meaning of this passage is, "Otherwise what shall they do, who undergo martyrdom, and are baptized in that sense, as baptism denotes death by martyrdom—if the dead are not at all raised?" Baptism is taken for martyrdom; see Matt. 20, 22, 23. The connexion of the following verse agrees to this sense, "What shall they do, who have undergone, and do undergo, martyrdom, if there be not a resurrection. And why do we also every day, and every moment, go in danger of martyrdom." *Lightfoot* adds other arguments for taking the passage thus, and ver. 30 evidently speaks of the sense the apostle had of his daily danger of martyrdom, in terms like those he uses in other places.—*Macknight's* view is similar.

Shuttleworth's paraphrase is, "Why, let me ask, are we baptized into that faith of a crucified and dead Redeemer, to which our already departed brethren have clung as their last hope in death, if the dead rise not?"

33. The apostle here quotes a verse from

Menander, an ancient comic poet. *Hales* remarks, Thus intimating from a heathen authority, that the conversation of such sensualists as ridicule the hope of another life, is subversive of sound morality as well as religion. Some ascribe the verse to Euripides; it had probably become a popular expression.

Ver. 35—50. The apostle answers two objections against the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead. 1. How are the dead raised up? that is, by what means? How can they be raised? This opinion prevailed among the heathens, and the sadducees. How can they be raised? Is it not utterly impossible? 2. As to the quality of the bodies, which shall rise. Will it be with the same body; with like shape, and form, and stature, and members, and qualities? The former objection is that of those who opposed the doctrine, the latter the inquiry of curious doubters.

To the first, this was to be brought about by Divine power, that very power which all observe does somewhat very like it, year after year, in the death and revival of the corn, ver. 36; and why should any be so foolish as to imagine, that the man once dead cannot be made to live again, by the same power which every year brings the dead grain to life? This is the substance of the answer to the first question. It is foolish to question the Almighty Divine power to raise the dead, when we see it every day quickening and reviving things that are dead.

In answer to the second inquiry: 1. There is a change made in the grain that is sown; it is not that body which shall be, that is sown, but bare grain of wheat or barley; but God gives it such a body as he will, and in such a way as he will, and so as to distinguish all kinds from each other. This is plainly in the Divine power, though we no more know how it is done, than we know how a dead man is raised to life again. The grain undergoes a great change; and so will the dead, when they rise and live again. The seed dies, it ceases to be a grain of corn, and can no more be used as such, though a part of it springs into new life, by a process which we can no more fully understand than we can the manner of the resurrection. The works of creation and providence read us daily lectures of humility, as well as teach us to admire the Creator's wisdom and goodness.

2. There is a great variety among other bodies, as there is among plants. In bodies of flesh, all flesh is not the same, ver. 39. In bodies celestial and terrestrial, there is also a difference; and the true glory of every being consists in its fitness for its rank and state. There is a variety of glory among heavenly bodies, ver. 41. The bodies of the dead, when they rise, will be changed, so that they will be fitted for the heavenly regions; and that there will be a variety of glories among the bodies of the dead. Also that it must be easy to Divine power to raise the dead, and recover their mouldered bodies. Can God form such various beings, yet not be able to raise the dead?

3. Burying the dead is like committing seed to the earth, that it may spring out of it again. Our bodies, which are sown, are corruptible, liable to moulder to dust; but when we rise, they will not be liable to corruption. It is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory. Nothing is more loathsome than a dead body. But glory will be put upon it at the resurrection; it will be made like the glorious body of our Saviour. Our diseases, and the death in which they end, are peculiar evidences of human weakness; and the state of the body when laid in the earth, shows in an affecting manner how little man's power and abilities can do for him. But the body of a believer will be endued with power of which we have no conception. It is sown a body fitted to the low condition, and pleasures and enjoyments of this life. But believers shall at the resurrection have bodies purified and refined, made fit to be perpetual associates of spirits made perfect. And why should it not be as much in the Almighty power of God, to raise incorruptible, glorious, lively, spiritual bodies, out of the ruins of those vile, corruptible, lifeless, and animal ones, as first to make matter out of nothing, and then, out of the same mass of matter, produce such variety of beings, both in earth and heaven? To God all things are possible. Cannot he raise our bodies suited for the state intended for them, consistently with our being personally the same, though in a manner not explained to us?

4. This is illustrated by a comparison. As we have our natural body from the first Adam, we expect our spiritual body

from the Second. He is the Resurrection and the Life, John 11. 25; 5. 20, 21. He is the author and source of spiritual life and holiness, unto all his people, by the supply of his Holy Spirit. Nor does this quickening energy relate only to the soul; he will also quicken and change the mortal body by his Spirit. The first man was made of the earth, and his body was fitted to the region of his abode: but the Second Adam is he who came from heaven, and giveth life to the world, John 6. 33; he who came down from heaven, and was in heaven at the same time, John 3. 13; the Lord of heaven and earth. We must have weak, frail, mortal bodies by descent from the first Adam, before we can have lively, spiritual, and immortal ones by the quickening power of the Second. Yet if we are Christ's, true believers in him, it is as certain that we shall have spiritual bodies, as it is now that we have natural or animal ones. The dead in Christ shall not only rise, but shall rise thus gloriously changed. The natural and carnal state in both cases precede the spiritual. We are born in sin, bearing the image of the first Adam, and afterwards born again to bear the image of the second Adam, the soul continuing the same, though new created.

5. The reason of this change, ver. 50. The natural body is flesh and blood, a corruptible frame, liable to moulder. But no such thing shall inherit the heavenly regions. The heavenly inheritance is incorruptible,* 1 Peter 1. 4. How can this be possessed by flesh and blood, which is corruptible and will fade away? It must be changed into ever-during substance, before it can be capable of possessing the heavenly inheritance. The bodies of the saints, when they rise again, will be changed. They are now corruptible flesh and blood, they will be then incorruptible, glorious, and spiritual bodies, fitted to the celestial world and state, where they are ever afterwards to dwell. The human body in its present form, and with its animal wants and infirmities, cannot enter or enjoy the kingdom of God, for flesh and blood cannot inherit heaven. Then let us not sow to the flesh of which we can only reap corruption.

And, observe, the body necessarily follows the destination of the mind. He, therefore, who gains a title to endless

life, makes complete provision for the welfare of the whole man. In the christian faith all good is united; our duty and our interest, the well-being of the soul, and that of the body, the blessings of time and those of eternity. He therefore, who neglects the life of the soul, casts away his present good; he who refuses to do his duty, squanders his all.—(17.)

35. The doctrine denied by some at Corinth was that of a future existence in another world. As the future existence of the soul will in fact be connected with the future existence of the body, to give a just and comprehensive view of the former of these subjects, it was necessary to enter into a particular consideration of the latter. St. Paul here begins his examination of it by putting an objection against a future state into the mouth of an opponent, derived from apprehended difficulties concerning the future existence of the body. The objection is without weight, as it merely expresses the objector's ignorance on the subject. Still it is the objection which probably rises the soonest and oftener. In considering this, the apostle not only removes it, but unfolds many truths concerning it, of the most edifying and glorious nature.—See note on this passage from *Dwight*, at the end of the chapter.

36. St. Paul shows, by the analogy of a grain of wheat, that the same thing may rise again, though it will be wholly altered in form and appearance.—*Burton*.

37. It is now universally admitted that what is called the personal identity of sentient beings has nothing to do with the substantial identity of their bodily organs. A human individual grows up from infancy to manhood, and from manhood to old age, during which period the whole substance of his limbs is changed again and again; yet his own recollections and internal consciousness tell him to the last that he is the same person who thought and acted four-score years ago. St. Paul's illustration of this mysterious question, therefore, is perfectly appropriate.—*Shuttleworth*.

Ver. 51—57. All the saints should not die, but all would be changed. What cannot Almighty Power effect? That power which calls the dead into life, can thus soon and suddenly change the living; for changed they must be, as well as the dead; because flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God. The apostle shows the Corinthians this mystery. In the gospel, many truths, before utterly unknown, are made known; many truths, dark and obscure before, are there revealed. The trumpet must sound. At this summons the graves shall open, the dead saints shall rise in an incorruptible state, ver. 52. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality, ver. 53. How otherwise could man be a fit inhabitant of

the incorruptible regions? Then death shall for ever disappear in those regions to which our Lord will bear his risen saints. Therefore the saints upon this destruction of death will break out into a song of triumph.

1. They will glory over death as a vanquished enemy. Where is now thy sting, thy power to hurt? We were dead; but behold, we live again, and shall die no more. Thou art vanquished and disarmed. O grave, where is now thy victory? In a moment, the power of death, and the conquests and spoils of the grave, are gone; and the saints, when they become immortal, to the honour of their Saviour, and the praise of Divine grace, shall glory over vanquished death! Let us seek the full assurance of faith and hope, that in the midst of pain, and in the prospect of dissolution, we may think without emotion on the darkness, the corruption, the horrors of the tomb, assured that our bodies will there sleep at ease, and in the mean time our souls will be present with the Redeemer, and our bodies be raised to unspeakable happiness.

2. Sin is the parent of death, and gives it all its hurtful power, embittering the dying agonies of man with the dread of future punishment. The sting of death is sin; but Christ, by dying, has taken out this sting; he has made atonement for sin, he has obtained remission of it. The strength of sin is the law. None can answer its demands, endure its curse, or expiate his own transgressions? Hence terror and anguish. Hence the wretched cleave to life. Hence death is terrible to the unbelieving and the impenitent. Hence needless alarms to the weak and trembling believer! But the curse of the law is removed by our Redeemer's becoming a curse for us. Death may seize a believer, but cannot hold him in his power. There is a day coming, when the dead saints shall revive, and become incorruptible and immortal, and be put out of the reach of death for ever. Then will it plainly appear, that, as to them, death will have lost its strength and sting by the mediation of Christ. By dying, he conquered death, and spoiled the grave; through faith in him, believers become sharers in his conquests. They often rejoice before-hand, in the hope of his victory; and when they rise glorious

from the grave, will boldly triumph over death. It is by the grace of God, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, that we are freely justified, Rom. 3. 24. It is no wonder that this triumph of the saints over death, should issue in thanksgiving to God, ver. 57. We only enjoy our blessings and honours when God has glory from them. Shall they not then rejoice in the Lord, and be glad in the God of their salvation? When he shows such wonders to the dead, shall they not arise and praise him? Ps. 88. 10. Those who remain under the power of death, can have no heart to praise; but such conquests and triumphs will certainly tune the tongues of the saints to thankfulness for the victory, and for the means whereby it is obtained. It is given of God through Jesus Christ; a victory, not given because we are worthy, but because Christ is so; and because he has by dying obtained this conquest for us. How many springs of joy to the saints, and thanksgiving to God, are opened by the death and resurrection, the sufferings and conquests of the Redeemer! With what acclamations will the saints rising from the dead applaud him! How will the heaven of heavens resound his praises for ever. Thanks be to God, will be the burden of their song; and angels will declare consent with a loud Amen, Hallelujah.

Ver. 58. In this verse we have a threefold exhortation. 1. That believers should be steadfast, firm in the faith of the gospel, that gospel which the apostle had preached, and they had received. This great article of the resurrection of the dead is evidently founded on the death of Christ. 2. To be unmoveable in their hope and expectation of this great privilege, of being raised incorruptible and immortal. These are not vain, but solid hopes, built upon sure foundations, the purchase and power of their risen Saviour, and the promise of God, to whom it is impossible to lie. Hopes that shall be their most powerful supports under all the pressures of life, the most effectual antidotes against the fears of death, and the most quickening motives to diligence and perseverance in christian duty. Christians should live in the most firm expectation of a blessed resurrection. This hope should be an an-

chor to their souls, firm and sure, Heb. 6. 19. 3. To abound in the work of the Lord, and that always, in the Lord's service, in obeying the Lord's commands. Diligent and persevering therein, going ever on toward perfection; continually making advances in true piety, ready and apt for every good work. What vigour and resolution, what constancy and patience, should these hopes inspire!

Their labour shall not be in vain in the Lord. They have all the assurance that can be expected. Is there any room to doubt a fact so well attested? True christians have undoubted evidence that their labour will not be vain in the Lord; their most diligent services, their most painful sufferings, will not be in vain; none of them will be vain or unprofitable. The labour of christians will not be lost labour; they may lose for God, but they shall lose nothing by him; they shall be abundantly rewarded. He will do exceeding abundantly above what they can now ask or think. Neither the services they do for him, nor the sufferings they endure for him here, are worthy to be compared with the joy hereafter to be revealed in them. Rom. 8. 18. If they serve him now, they shall see him hereafter; if they suffer for him on earth, they shall reign with him in heaven; if they die for his sake, they shall rise again from the dead, be crowned with glory, honour, and immortality, and inherit eternal life. May Christ give us faith, and increase our faith, that we may not only be safe, but joyful and triumphant.

ON THE RESURRECTION OF THE BODY.

The following extract from *Dwight* contains many valuable remarks on the subject:—

One source of perplexity with regard to the doctrine of the resurrection has been the question, whether the same body will be raised? All the difficulties which attend this subject seem to be derived, either from extending our philosophical inquiries beyond the power of the understanding to answer them, as is sometimes done, or from neglecting to settle what we intend by sameness. If the question intends, *whether the same atoms which have composed our bodies in the present world will constitute the body raised at the final day*, both reason and revelation answer it in the negative. The whole number of particles, which have, at different times, constituted the body of a man, during his progress through life, will undoubtedly be sufficient to constitute many such bodies. St. Paul also observes to the objector, in answer to this very question, "Thou fool; that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die; and that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body

which shall be, but bare grain : it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain : but God giveth it a body, as it hath pleased him. So also is the resurrection of the dead." And again, "Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God." This scheme of thought he pursues, from the thirty-fifth verse, throughout most of the chapter.

If the same constitution, arrangement, and qualities of the body, be intended by the question ; it is equally evident, that the same body will not be raised. This is decisively taught us in the last quoted declaration, and in the passage immediately following : "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God ; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption." It is also clearly shown by the general tenour of the reasoning contained in the whole passage. Reason too decides with absolute certainty, that a constitution, which involves in its nature decay and termination, cannot belong to a body destined for the residence of an immortal and ever vigorous mind.

Should it be asked, *Whether some of the same particles which are found in our earthly bodies will not be transferred to those which will be found at the resurrection ?* it may be answered, that this point has not been determined in scripture, and that the determination of it lies beyond the reach of philosophy. Let me add, that the question itself is perfectly nugatory.

That the body will be the same in such a sense as to be known, appears sufficiently evident from the scriptures. Even departed spirits, in their intermediate state, appear plainly to be exhibited in the gospel as known to each other. Our Saviour informs us, that "many shall come from the east, and from the west, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God, with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob." In order to a complete fulfilment of the intention of this promise, it seems necessary that the persons here spoken of should know these patriarchs. Lazarus, Abraham, and the rich man, are all exhibited in the parable as known to each other. Moses and Elias also were known by the disciples, on the mount of transfiguration, to be Moses and Elias ; one of them an embodied, the other an unembodied spirit. From these facts it appears sufficiently evident, that mankind will know each other in the future world, and that their bodies will so far be the same as to become the means of this knowledge.

Against the resurrection itself there is no presumption, and in favour of it a strong one, from analogy. Many works of God naturally and strongly dispose the mind to admit the doctrine without hesitation. In some climates almost the whole vegetable world dies annually under the chilling influence of winter. At the return of spring the face of nature is renewed ; the plants, shrubs, and trees with which it is adorned, are again clothed with verdure, life, and beauty.

In the insect creation we find a direct and striking example of the resurrection itself. Animals of this class begin their existence in the form of worms. After continuing some time in the humble state of being to which they are necessarily confined by their structure, they die, and are gone. In the moment of death they construct for themselves a species of shell, or tomb, in which they may with the strictest propriety be said to be buried. Here they are dissolved into a mass of semi-transparent water, the whole which remains of the previously exist-

ing animal, exhibiting to the eye no trace of life, and no promise of a future revival. When the term of its burial approaches to a period, the tomb uncloses, and a winged animal comes forth, with a nobler form, often exquisitely beautiful, brilliant with the gayest splendour, possessed of new and superior powers, and destined to a more refined and more exalted life. Its food is now the honey of flowers, its field of being the atmosphere. Here it expatiates at large in the delightful exercise of its faculties, and the enjoyment of the sunbeams, which were the immediate means of its newly-acquired existence.

Could there be a rational, or even a specious doubt concerning the power of God, and his sufficiency to raise the body from the grave, this change in the world of insects, accomplished before our eyes, and for these animals, not less extraordinary than that which we are contemplating is for man, puts an end to every such doubt, and places the possibility of this event beyond debate. In truth, this change is nothing less than a glorious type of the resurrection.

Whatever sameness may attend the body at the resurrection, it is clear from the scriptures, that, in many important particulars, it will be greatly changed ; so much changed, as to wear in various respects an entirely new character. These may now be mentioned.

1. *The body will be raised incorruptible.*

"It is sown," says St Paul, "in corruption ; it is raised in incorruption."

One of the most striking characteristics of the human body in its present state is its universal tendency to decay. This tendency appears, and often fatally, in its earliest existence, and at every succeeding stage of its progress. It is, however, most visible and affecting after it has passed the middle point of life. Then decay arrests it in many forms, and with irresistible power ; then the limbs gradually stiffen, the faculties lose their vigour, the strength declines, the face becomes overspread with wrinkles, and the head with the locks of age. Health, at the same time, recedes by degrees, even from the firmest constitution ; pains multiply, feebleness and languor lay hold on the whole system, and death at length seizes the frame as his prey and changes it to corruption and to dust.

A mighty and glorious difference will be made in our nature, when the body revives beyond the grave. All the evils and accidents which befall it in the present world will then have lost their power. Those who rise to the resurrection of life will hunger no more, neither thirst any more ; neither will the sun light on them, nor any heat. They will, "like gold tried in the fire," remain bright and indestructible through the endless succession of ages.

2. *The body will be raised immortal.*

"When this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal, immortality."

Incorruption and immortality are attributes so nearly allied as not easily to be separated in our discussions. Still they are only kindred attributes, not the same. An incorruptible body, although it cannot perish by decay and dissolution, may yet be annihilated. An immortal body will know no end, either from its own weakness, or from external power. Such God has been pleased to constitute the bodies of his children beyond the grave. Death to them shall be no more. In defiance of time, and superior to injury, the body will "live with him for ever and ever."

3. *The body will be raised in power.*

"It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power," ver. 43.

In the future world, the righteous "serve God day and night in his temple," Rev. vii. 15; that is, they serve him without cessation or rest; and *per se*, of course, faculties fitted for the performance of these services; faculties, whose vigour the magnitude of no duty shall overcome, and the continuance of action fatigue or impair. Originally destined for an existence of this nature, the powers of the body will correspond with the activity of the mind; and will sustain without injury, defect, or decay, and will accomplish, with enjoyment growing out of its exertions, every labour which it is required to undergo. Instead of being exhausted or weakened, it seems evident, that its strength, as well as its other attributes, will, like those of the mind, advance towards a higher and higher perfection throughout eternity.

4. *The body will, at the resurrection, be endued with great activity.*

In Luke xx. 36, our Saviour declares, that the righteous will, in the future state of existence, be literally "equal to the angels;" but perhaps intended here to denote, "like the angels;" that is, possessing in a near and kindred degree the attributes which they possess. Accordingly, in Rev. 4, we are taught, that the elders, the representatives of the ancient and modern churches, are placed round about the throne, together with the four living ones, the representatives of the angelic host. The resemblance here exhibited strongly exemplifies this declaration of Christ. Their station is substantially the same; their employments are the same.

The activity of angels is disclosed to us by the scriptures in many passages, and in language of the greatest force: in the ninth chapter of Daniel particularly. There we are told that Gabriel received a command in heaven, while Daniel was employed in prayer, to interpret his vision; and that "being caused to fly swiftly, he touched Daniel about the time of the evening oblation." The activity here declared is plainly superior both to conception and calculation; and exceeds that of the sunbeams beyond any proportion perceptible by our minds. Similar to this representation will be the activity of the righteous in the future world.

5. *As all these attributes, united, are a complete establishment of endless youth; the body at the resurrection will of course be invested with this delightful characteristic.*

On this subject it will be unnecessary to dwell, after what has been already said. I shall only observe, that the angels who appeared to Mary and the apostles after the resurrection of Christ were, although created many thousand years before, still young; and were regarded by them, at first, as being young men. On the angels, duration makes in this respect no impression. Such is the character of all the children of God beyond the grave.

6. *The body will at the resurrection be arrayed in glory and beauty.*

"It is sown in dishonour," says St. Paul, "it is raised in glory," ver. 43. "Who shall change our vile body," says the same apostle, "and fashion it like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself." In stricter language, "Who shall fashion anew the body of our humiliation, that it may become of the like

form with his glorious body, according to the energy, whereby he is able also to subdue all things unto himself."

On the mount of transfiguration, Christ appeared to Peter, James, and John, in his glorious body; then, as we are told by the evangelist, "his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment became white and glistering." In Rev. 1, we have a more ample exhibition of the same illustrious object, in some respects emblematical, but in all sublime and glorious beyond a parallel. In this wonderful change, St. Paul observes, there shall be a display of "energy," that is, of power and skill, like that by which he "subdues all things unto himself." What a transformation must that be, which this poor, frail, perishable body will experience, when the full import of this prediction shall be accomplished! How exceedingly is such a change to be coveted by beings like ourselves; subject as we are to pain and disease, decay and death!

7. *The body raised will be a spiritual body.*

"It is sown," says St. Paul, "a natural" or animal "body, it is raised a spiritual body: there is a natural" or animal "body: there is a spiritual body."

By an animal body is intended the present body of man; depending for its continuance upon the principle of animal life, the subject of innumerable frailties, and making a regular progress to dissolution.

Of a spiritual body, it is not, perhaps, in our power to form an adequate conception. But St. Paul, after declaring that there is a spiritual body, as well as an animal one, illustrates the declaration by observing, that "the first Adam was made a living soul, the last a quickening spirit: that the first was, of the earth, earthy; the second, the Lord from heaven; that they who are earthy are like the earthly Adam, and they who are heavenly like the heavenly Adam; and that, as we have borne the image of the earthly, so we shall bear the image of the heavenly." He then declares, that "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God." Hence he observes, that "those who are alive" at the sounding of the last trumpet must necessarily undergo a change of the same nature with that which the dead will experience, and which he has described in the preceding part of the chapter.

From these observations it may be asserted,

(1) *That the body raised will not be composed of flesh and blood.*

(2) *That it will in its nature possess powers of life, wholly superior to those we now possess; being to resemble in this respect "the quickening Spirit," whose image it will bear.*

(3) *That none of its organs will prove temptations to sin, as in the present world; but all of them aids to holiness; this circumstance being often, in the scriptures, the professed distinction between that which is natural, or animal, and that which is spiritual.*

(4) *That its organs of perception, and of enjoyment also, will possess a far higher and nobler nature than those with which we are now furnished.*

(4) *That, generally, the attributes of the body will so resemble those of the mind, as to render the epithet, spiritual, the proper description of its nature.* Like the mind, it may, not without probability, contain inherently the principles of life, and the seeds of immortality.

CHAPTER XVI.

The apostle gives orders about a collection for the poor saints at Jerusalem, ver. 1—4. Mentions his design of visiting the Corinthians, 5—9. Recommends Timothy, and encourages their hopes of seeing Apollos, 10—12. Exhorts them to watchfulness and steadfastness in faith and love, and to show a becoming respect to Stephanas and his family, and to all his fellow-labourers 13—18. Sends christian salutations from himself and others, and concludes with a solemn admonition, benediction, and assurance of his own love to them, 19—24.

Ver. 1—4. The apostle here directs about a charitable collection for the distressed and poverty of christians in Judea. The good examples of other christians and churches should excite a holy emulation in us. Every one was to lay by as he could spare from time to time for this charitable purpose. It is good to lay up in store for good uses. Those who are rich in this world, should be rich in good works, 1 Tim. 6. 17, 18. They are to lay by, as God has been pleased to bless and succeed their labours and business. The diligent hand will not make rich, without the Divine blessing, Prov. 10. 4, 22. And what argument more proper to excite us to charity to the people and children of God, than to consider all we have as his gift. The more they had, through God's blessing, gained by business or labour, their traffic or work, the more they were to lay by. God expects that our beneficence to others should be in proportion to his bounty to us.

This was to be done on the first day of the week, the Lord's day, when public assemblies were held, and public worship was celebrated. Works of mercy are the genuine fruits of true love to God, and therefore are a proper service on his own day. The apostle would have all ready against his coming. But he would not meddle with their contributions without their consent. It would argue that they were hearty in this service, if they sent some of their own body on so long and hazardous a journey or voyage. He would go to Jerusalem, to carry contributions to their suffering brethren, if need be. Ministers are doing their proper business, when promoting or helping in works of charity.

The apostle calls this collection liberality or grace, it was owing to the goodness of God that they were able to con-

tribute to others, and to the grace of God that they had a heart to do it; and because it was in a free and generous manner, and in the exercise of grace, of faith in Christ, and of love to the saints, that they did it, and with a view to the glory of the grace of God, of which this was a fruit and evidence.—(27.)

Ver. 5—9. The heart of a christian minister must be toward the people among whom he has laboured long, and with remarkable success. Though some despised St. Paul, and made a faction against him, doubtless many loved him tenderly, and paid him all the respect due to an apostle and their spiritual father. It is plain that he hoped for some good effect, because he says, he intended that they should bring him on his journey, whithersoever he went. ver. 6. He loved them so, that he longed to take up his abode among them for some time. We have the limitation of this purpose, ver. 7. Though the apostles wrote under inspiration, they did not know thereby how God would dispose of them. All our purposes must be made with submission to the Divine Providence, James 4. 15. Here is stated the reason for his staying at Ephesus for the present, ver. 9. He had brought many to Christ, and had great hope of bringing many more. Great success in the work of the gospel commonly creates many enemies. There were many adversaries; therefore the apostle determined to stay. Adversaries and opposition do not break the spirits of faithful and successful ministers, but only warm their zeal, and inspire them with fresh courage. Success will give vigour to a minister, though enemies rage, blaspheme, and persecute. It is not the opposition of enemies, but the hardness and obstinacy of his hearers, and the backslidings and revolt of professors, that discourage a faithful minister, and break his heart.

5. "When I have passed through Macedonia, for I am passing through Macedonia"—*Scholia*.

9. The opening a door, in scripture language, denotes the affording an opportunity.

Ver. 10—12. Timothy was sent by the apostle to correct the abuses among them, ver. 10. Christians should bear reproof from their ministers. He warns them against despising him, ver. 11.

He knew that Timothy would do nothing to bring contempt on his character. But pride was a reigning sin among the Corinthians, and such a caution was necessary. Christians should not pour contempt on any, especially the faithful ministers of Christ. These, whether young or old, are to be had in high esteem for their work's sake. He tells them they should use Timothy well while with them; and send him away in friendship, prepared for his journey to Paul. Faithful ministers are not only to be well received by a people among whom they may for a season minister, but are to be sent away with due respect.

Timothy came to do the work of the Lord. Therefore to vex his spirit, would be to grieve the Holy Spirit; to despise him, would be to despise Him that sent him. Those who work the work of the Lord, should neither be terrified nor despised, but treated with all tenderness and respect. Though one party seems to have declared for Apollos against Paul, ch. 4. 6, yet Paul did not hinder Apollos from going to Corinth in his own absence, nay he pressed him to go thither. Faithful ministers are not apt to be jealous of each other. True charity and brotherly love think no evil. And where should these reign, if not in the breasts of the ministers of Christ? Paul signified his regard to the church of Corinth, by intreating Apollos to go to them, though they had used him ill, and Apollos shows his respect to Paul, by declining the journey till the Corinthians were in a better temper. It becomes the ministers of the gospel, to manifest concern for each other's reputation and usefulness.

Ver. 13—18. A christian is always in danger, and therefore should ever be on the watch; but the danger is greater at some times, and under some circumstances. The Corinthians were in manifest danger upon many accounts. A christian should be fixed in the faith of the gospel, and never desert or renounce it. It is by this faith alone that he will be able to keep his ground in an hour of temptation; it is by faith that we stand, 2 Cor. 1. 24, it is by this that we must overcome the world, 1 John 5. 4, when it tempts and when it terrifies. We must stand in the faith of the gospel, if we would maintain our integrity. The

apostle advises them to act like men, and be strong. Christians should, in an especial manner, be firm in defending the points of faith which are at the foundation of sound and practical religion, such as were attacked among the Corinthians. These must be maintained with solid judgment and strong resolution. He advises them to do every thing in charity, ver. 14, to manage all their concerns according to the dictates of that love which he had so fully explained to them.

Christians should be careful that charity not only reigns in their hearts, but shines out in their lives. There is a great difference between christian firmness and feverish wrath and transport. The apostle gave particular directions as to some who had eminently served the cause of Christ among them. The household of Stephanas is mentioned by him, and their character is, that they were the first converts to christianity in that region of Greece. They had disposed and devoted themselves to serve the saints upon all occasions, both in their temporal and spiritual concerns. The family of Stephanas seems to have been a family of rank and importance in those parts, yet they willingly offered themselves to this service. He mentions Stephanas and Fortunatus, and Achaicus, as coming to him from the church of Corinth, ver. 17, 18. These gave a more perfect account of the state of the church, than their letter, and he had been made more easy by converse with them. It is great refreshment to a faithful minister, to find that matters are not so bad as they had been represented by common report. It is a grief to him, to hear ill of those he loves; it gladdens his heart to hear the report is false. He would have those persons acknowledged, ver. 18, that is, owned and respected. They deserve it for their good offices. Those who serve the saints, those who consult the honour of the churches, and are concerned to remove reproaches from them, are to be valued, and esteemed, and loved. He advises that they should willingly acknowledge the worth of such, and all who helped with the apostles, and laboured, ver. 16. They were persons to whom the Corinthians owed peculiar respect, and should be had in honourable esteem.

Ver. 19—24. The apostle closes this epistle with salutations to the church of Corinth: christianity by no means destroys civility. Paul could find room in an epistle treating of important matters, to send the salutations of friends. Religion should promote a courteous and obliging temper towards all. Those misrepresent and reproach religion, who would take encouragement from it, to be sour and morose. Christian salutations are not mere empty compliments; they carry in them real expressions of good-will, and recommend to the Divine grace and blessing. Those who salute in the Lord, wish their brethren all good from the Lord. Every christian family should in some respects be a christian church, ver. 19. Wherever two or three are gathered together, and Christ is among them, there is a church. To these salutations, he subjoins advice, that they should greet one another with a holy kiss, ver. 20, or with sincere good-will. When the churches of Asia, and the christian brethren so remote, heartily saluted the Corinthians, and expressed so much good-will to them, it would be a shame for them not to own and love one another as brethren. He subjoins his own salutation; The salutation of me Paul, with mine own hand, ver. 21, that they might know it to be genuine, 2 Thess. 3. 17.

Here is a very solemn warning; If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema, Maran-atha, ver. 22. Holy fear is a very good friend, both to holy faith and holy living. Observe, 1. The person described who is liable to this doom; It is he that loveth not the Lord Jesus Christ. He who blasphemes Christ, disowns his doctrine, slights and contemns his institutions, or, through pride of human knowledge and learning, despises his revealed word. Many who have Christ's name much in their mouths, have no true love to him in their hearts, will not have him rule over them, Luke 19. 27, no, not though they express very strong hopes of being saved by him. None love him in truth, who do not love his laws, and keep his commandments. There are many christians in name, who do not love Christ Jesus the Lord in sincerity. What! not love Him who loved us, and gave himself for us, who shed his blood for us, to testify his love to us, and that after heinous

wrong and provocation? He must be an enemy of God's holy character and righteous government; an unhumiliated, impenitent sinner, destitute of all true holiness, and unfit for the enjoyment of heaven, who, under the profession of christianity, does not love the Lord Jesus Christ.

But, 2. We have here the doom of the person described; Let him be Anathema, Maran-atha, lie under the heaviest and most dreadful curse. Let him be separated from the people of God, from the favour of God, and delivered up to his final, irrevocable, and inexorable vengeance. Maran-atha is a syriac phrase, and signifies, The Lord cometh. That very Lord whom they do not love, to whom they are inwardly and really disaffected, whatever outward profession they make—He is coming to execute judgment! And to be exposed to his wrath, to be condemned by him, how dreadful! If he will destroy, who can save? Those who fall under his condemning sentence, must perish, and that for ever. They may conceal this fatal defect from the most discerning of their fellow-servants, but the Lord, when he cometh, will certainly detect it. Those who love not the Lord Jesus Christ, must perish without remedy. The wrath of God abides on every one who believes not the Son, John 3. 36. And true faith in Christ will ever produce sincere love to him. They love him not, who do not believe in him.

Let it be remembered that professing christians, who do not sincerely love their Master, lie under the heaviest curse which the Holy Spirit can suggest, an apostle can pronounce, and a Holy God inflict.—(80.)

Let us then call ourselves to account in this matter, and not rest in any religion which does not include the love of Christ, earnest desires for his salvation, gratitude for his mercies, and obedience to his commandments.

The apostle closes all with expressions of good-will. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ comprehends in it all that is good, for time or eternity. To wish our friends may have this grace with them, is wishing them the utmost good. And this we should wish all our friends and brethren in Christ. We can wish them nothing more, and we should wish them nothing less. We should

heartily pray, that they may value, seek, obtain, and secure, the grace and goodwill of their Lord and Judge. The most solemn warnings are the result of the tenderest affection and the greatest goodwill. We may tell our brethren and friends, with great plainness, that, if they love not the Lord Jesus Christ, they must perish, while we heartily wish the grace of Christ may be with them. And we may give them this warning, that they may prize and lay hold of this grace. Note also, that true christianity enlarges our hearts; it makes us wish those whom we love, the blessings of both worlds; this is implied in wishing the grace of Christ to be with them.

The apostle had dealt plainly with the Corinthians in this epistle, and told them of their faults with just severity; but he parts in love, ver. 24, makes solemn profession of his love to them for Christ's sake. His heart was with them, he truly loved them; but lest this should be deemed flattery, he adds, that his affection was the result of his religion, and would be guided by its rules. His heart would be with them, and he would bear them dear affection, as long as their hearts were with Christ, and they bore true affection to his cause and interest. We should cordially love all who are in Christ, and who love him in sin-

cerity. Not but we should love all men, and do them what good is in our power; but those must have our dearest affection, who are dear to Christ, and love him! May our love be with all who are in Christ Jesus!

Let us inquire whether all things appear worthless to us, when compared with Christ and his righteousness? and whether we are willing to give up worldly objects when they come in competition with him? Do we love his image in his people, and his ordinances as means of communion with him? Do we allow ourselves in any known sin, or in the neglect of any known duty? By such inquiries, faithfully made, we may judge of the state of our souls.

22. "If any man love not the Lord Jesus, let him be (that is, he will be) accursed. The Lord will come." This is not a prediction, but is said as a prediction, and would certainly come upon the jews if they did not repent, and of what actually came on them, because they did not repent, but continued to hate and execute the Saviour of the world—*T. H. Horne*.

When the jews had power of life and death, the form of the curse was, Let him be Anathema or accursed, which they carried into effect. When they lost that power they added, *Maranatha*, that is, *The Lord cometh*, who will execute judgment upon the offender. The apostle seems here to retort upon the jews, the curse they pronounced against Christ.—See *Hodderidge*, who notices that the apostle wrote this important sentence with his own hand.

THE SECOND EPISTLE TO THE CORINTHIANS.

THE second epistle to the Corinthians probably was written from Philippi, about a year after the preceding. The contents are closely connected with those of the former epistle, and were mainly occasioned by the manner in which St. Paul learned that what he formerly wrote had been received; this was such as to fill his heart with gratitude to God, who had enabled him so fully to discharge his duty towards them. Many had shown marks of repentance, and had amended their conduct, but others still adhered to their false teachers, and as the apostle delayed his visit in consequence of his unwillingness to treat them with severity, they charged him with levity and irresolution of conduct, so that he could not be a prophet. Also with pride, vain-glory, and severity, and they spake of his personal acquirements with contempt.

In this epistle we find the same ardent affection towards the disciples at Corinth, as in the former, the same zeal for the honour of the gospel, and the same boldness in giving christian reproof. Also many coincidences in the details, by which each epistle is confirmatory of the authenticity of the other.

The apostle here writes, 1. Accounting for not having come to them as soon as he promised. (2 Cor. ch. 1. 8—2. 4.) 2. He declares that his sentence against the incestuous person was not too severe, and now that offender had repented, he wishes him to be restored to communion with the church. (ch. 2. 5—11.) 3. He intimates his great success in preaching the gospel, not for his own glory, but that of the gospel itself. (ch. 2. 12—17.) This had peculiar efficacy upon the Corinthians, and far surpassed the ministry of Moses. Here is exhibited a beautiful contrast between the mosaic and christian dispensations, proving the superior glory of the gospel. (ch. 3.) In preaching this he had used all diligence and faithfulness, notwithstanding all his afflictions for its sake. (ch. 4.) under which he was supported by his certain prospect of a greater glory in heaven, to which he aspired. (ch. 5.) 4. He stirs them up to a holy life, and particularly to avoid

communion with idolaters, (ch. 6. 7.) 5. He excites them to finish their contributions for their poor brethren in Judea, (ch. 8. 9.) 6. He speaks for himself against the personal contemptibleness imputed to him by the false teacher and his adherents. (ch. 10-13.)

The first six chapters are highly practical, the rest have more immediate reference to the state of the Corinthian church, but they contain many rules of permanent and general application.

The elegance of diction, powers of persuasion, and force of argument, manifested in this epistle, are very remarkable. Also the confidence of the apostle in the goodness of his cause, and in the power of God to bear him out, is particularly to be noticed as affording the strongest internal testimony, not only of integrity, but of Divine inspiration. The confidence with which he asserts the reality of the miraculous powers conferred upon him, exhibits a striking proof of the Divine origin of christianity, while the evident reluctance with which he refers to these marks of his apostleship, displays the humility of his mind.

We have no particular accounts of the effects produced by this epistle; but from Acts 20 we find that the apostle made a second journey to Corinth, and while staying there for some time he wrote his epistle to the Romans, in which he sent salutations from some of the principal members of the Corinthian church. We learn from *Clement's* epistle to the Corinthians, that at the time he wrote St. Paul was considered by them as a divine apostle, to whose authority he might appeal; therefore the false teachers must have been silenced, or have quitted the place, thus giving additional proofs of St. Paul's divine mission.

CHAPTER I.

The apostle introduces this epistle to the Corinthian church, as he did the former, with an assertion of his apostolic office, and a salutation, ver. 1, 2. He blesses God for comforting him in, and delivering him out of, his tribulations; and turns his own experience into an argument for the encouragement of others under their troubles, 3-11. He professes his own and his fellow-labourers' integrity, 12-14. Assigns the principal reason of his not coming to them so soon as might have been expected from what he had said in his former letter; and so vindicates himself from the charge of inconstancy on that account, 15-24.

Ver. 1, 2. The apostleship was ordained by Christ, according to the Divine will; and Paul was called to it by Jesus Christ, according to the will of God. His dignifying Timothy with the title of brother, shows his humility, and his earnest desire to recommend Timothy to the esteem of the Corinthians. This epistle was sent to all the christians who lived in the region round about Corinth. In Christ Jesus no distinction is made between the inhabitants of city or country. The salutation or apostolical benediction is the same as in his former epistle; therein the apostle desires the two great and comprehensive blessings, grace and peace, for these Corinthians. These benefits are fitly joined together; there is no good and lasting peace without true grace; both come from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

We are encouraged to come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of

need. Jehovah is revealed as the God of peace, able to give peace to the troubled conscience, and to calm the raging passions of the soul. These blessings are imparted by him as the Father of his redeemed family. Our Saviour also is the proper object of worship, and the sole medium of Divine communications. He has promised to make his grace sufficient for us, and to perfect his strength in our weakness. He it is who says, Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you; let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.—(87.)

Ver. 3-6. The apostle begins with the narrative of God's goodness to him and his fellow-labourers in their manifold tribulations; of which he speaks by way of thanksgiving to God. The apostle breaks forth in praises and thanks to God, as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, thus reconciled to believers, and their Father in him. Also, as the Father of mercies, the source and author of every kind of mercy to sinful man; abounding in mercy, and delighting to exercise it. Also, as the God of all comfort, the inexhaustible and everlasting spring of peace, joy, and consolation, to all who trusted in him. The God of all comfort; from him proceedeth the Comforter, John 15. 26. He gives the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts. All comforts come from God, and our sweetest comforts are in him.

In all the afflictions of his people He is afflicted. He speaks peace to their souls by granting the free remission of sins: he comforts them by the enlivening influences of the Holy Spirit, and

by the rich communications of his grace. He is able to bind up the broken-hearted, to heal the most painful wounds, and to inspire with hope and joy under the heaviest sorrows.—(87.)

The reasons of the apostle's thanksgivings are, 1. The benefits he and his companions had received, ver. 4. In the world they had trouble, but in Christ they had peace. The apostles met with many tribulations, but found comfort in . . . They could assure others of the sufficiency of such Divine consolations, for they had experienced that, as their sufferings for Christ's sake abounded so their consolations also abounded, by the grace of Christ and the joy of his salvation. We receive the comfort of God's mercies, when we give him the glory. We speak best of God and his goodness, when we speak from our experience, and, in telling others, tell God also what he has done for our souls.

2. The advantage others might receive. God intended that they should be able to comfort others in trouble, ver. 4, by communicating to them their experiences of the Divine goodness and mercy. And the example of constancy, patience, and fortitude, shown by the apostle and his brethren, tended to embolden others for their sufferings, and to animate under them. What favours God bestows on us, are intended, not only to make us cheerful ourselves, but also that we may be useful to others, ver. 6. If we imitate the faith and patience of believers in their afflictions, we may hope to partake their consolations here, and their salvation hereafter. We must expect tribulations. They are needful, profitable, and unavoidable, and those most honoured by the Lord Jesus have been conformed to his sufferings; but he sends consolations sufficient to support such as simply trust in and serve him, and renders them thereby capable of comforting others.

3. *Doddridge* remarks that eleven out of St. Paul's thirteen epistles begin with exclamations of joy, praise, and thanksgiving. It appears as if all feeling of temporal afflictions was swallowed up when he thought of a christian church being planted.

Ver. 7-11. In these verses the apostle speaks to encourage the Corinthians; and tells them, ver. 7, of his persuasion, or steadfast hope, that they should benefit by the troubles he and his compa-

nions had met with; so that their faith should not be weakened, but their consolations increased. He tells them,

1. What their sufferings had been, ver. 8. They were pressed to a very extraordinary degree.

2. What they did in their distress; God often brings his people into great straits, that they may know their own insufficiency to help themselves, and be induced to place their trust and hope in his all-sufficiency. Man's extremity is God's opportunity, and we may safely trust in God, who raiseth the dead, ver. 9. He who can do that, can do all things, and is worthy to be trusted in at all times. If we should be brought so low as to despair even of life, yet we may then trust God, who can bring back even from death.

3. What was the deliverance they had obtained. Their hope and trust were not in vain, nor shall any be ashamed who trust in the Lord. God had delivered them, and did still deliver, ver. 10; Having obtained help of God, they continued to that day, Acts 26. 22.

4. What use they made of this deliverance. We trust that he will yet deliver us, ver. 10. Past experiences are great encouragements to faith and hope, and lay us under great obligations to trust in God for time to come.

5. What was desired of the Corinthians upon this account; That they would help together by prayer for them, ver. 11. Trust in God must not supersede the use of appointed means, and we should pray for ourselves and for one another. The apostle had great interest in the throne of grace, yet he desires the help of others' prayers. And it is our duty not only to help one another with prayer, but in praise and thanksgiving, and thereby to make suitable returns for benefits received.

The Lord sometimes permits his beloved children to be pressed out of measure, even above strength; and to be driven almost to despair of deliverance; that having the sentence of death in themselves they may effectually be cured of self-confidence, and learn more simply to trust his almighty power and all-sufficient grace. This often takes place in the concerns of their souls. Inward temptations, and conflicts connected with outward difficulties, make them feel that infinite mercy and all

powerful grace, alone can preserve them from terrible downfalls, or even from final ruin. Thus they learn to cast themselves wholly on God, and when rescued from so great a death, they admire his love, and are encouraged to hope that he will still deliver and make them victorious over all the enemies of their souls. In such seasons of conflict and terror we feel our need of the prayers of others, and thus learn to pray for them, and to unite in thanksgivings with those who receive deliverances. Thus both trials and mercies will issue in good for ourselves and for others.

8. Probably the tumult at Ephesus, Acts 19.

Ver. 12—14. Many had been prejudiced against the apostle, but amidst all his trials he possessed a constant joy and consolation in the testimony of his conscience. Though, as a sinner, he could only rejoice and glory in Christ Jesus, yet, as a believer, he might rejoice and glory in the inward consciousness of being really what he professed. Especially that he had been enabled to exercise his ministry with simplicity, aiming only to glorify God, by doing good to men; and in godly sincerity, that integrity which sprang from the fear and love of God, and approved itself to him; and that he had acted, not with worldly wisdom or dissimulation, but under the influence of Divine grace. The testimony of conscience for us, upon good grounds, will be matter of rejoicing, at all times and in all conditions.

Observe, conscience witnessed concerning their conversation, their constant course and tenour of life. Thereby we may judge ourselves, and not by this or by that single act. Their conversation was in simplicity and in godly sincerity. The principle they acted from was not carnal and worldly, but a vital gracious principle in their hearts, that came from God, and tended to God. Our conversation will be well ordered, when we live and act under the influence and command of such a gracious principle in the heart. The apostle appeals to the knowledge of the Corinthians with hope and confidence, ver. 13, 14. These knew how holily, justly, and unblameably the apostle and his companions behaved. They had acknowledged this in part already, and he felt confident that they would never have any good rea-

son to think or say otherwise of him. It is happy when ministers and people rejoice in each other here; and this joy will be complete in that day when the great Shepherd shall appear. Being sincere in our repentance, and having faith in Christ and his atoning blood; being careful to serve the Lord in simplicity and in godly sincerity, we may take this evidence of our acceptance in Christ as a comfort amidst troubles, reproaches, suspicions, and slanders, rejoicing in the testimony of our conscience. Having this, we may leave our characters in the Lord's hands, using proper means to clear them, when the credit of the gospel, or our usefulness, calls for it.

Ver. 15—24. The apostle vindicates himself from the imputation of levity and inconstancy, in not coming to Corinth. His adversaries there sought to blemish his character, and, it seems, they took hold of this. He avers the sincerity of his intention, ver. 15—17, in confidence of their good opinion, and that they would believe him, when he declared that he really intended to come, that they might receive further advantage by his ministry. It was not a rash and inconsiderate resolution he had taken, for he had laid his plans for this, ver. 16, and they might conclude it was for some weighty reasons he had altered his purpose. Good men should be careful to preserve the reputation of sincerity and constancy; they *should not* resolve but on mature deliberation, and they *will not* change their resolves unless for weighty reasons. The apostle would not have the Corinthians infer that his gospel was false or uncertain, ver. 18, 19. Even if he had been fickle in his purposes, or false in his promises, yet it would not follow that the gospel preached, not only by him, but also by others in full agreement with him, was either false or doubtful. For God is true, and the Son of God, Jesus Christ, is true. He is the true God, and eternal life. Jesus Christ, whom the apostles preached, is not yea and nay, but in him was yea, ver. 19, even infallible truth. And the promises of God in Christ are not yea and nay, but yea and amen, ver. 20. There is inviolable constancy, and unquestionable sincerity and certainty, in all parts of the gospel of Christ. If in the promises

the ministers of the gospel make about their own affairs, they see cause sometimes to vary from them, yet the promises of the gospel-covenant, which they preach, stand firm and inviolable. Bad men are false; good men are fickle; but God is true, neither fickle nor false.

* Nothing can really render the promises of God more certain than they are; but God's giving them to us through Christ, assures us that they are indeed his promises; as in Christ there is such a real evidence of his conversing with men, and as the wonders God hath actually wrought in the incarnation, life, resurrection, and ascension of his Son, confirm our faith, and make it easier for us to believe such promises, the very greatness of which might otherwise have been a hinderance to our faith, and have caused us to hesitate whether such promises were really given to us.—(80.)

They are confirmed by the Holy Spirit. He establishes christians in the faith of the gospel; he has anointed them with his sanctifying grace, which in scripture is often compared to oil; he has sealed them, for their security and confirmation; and he is given as an earnest in their hearts. See 1 John 2. 20. The illumination of the Spirit is an earnest of everlasting light; the quickening of the Spirit is an earnest of everlasting life; and the comforts of the Spirit are an earnest of everlasting joy. The truth of God, the mediation of Christ, and the operation of the Spirit, are all engaged that the promises shall be sure to all the saints, and the accomplishment of them shall be to the glory of God, for the glory of his rich and sovereign grace, and never-failing truth and faithfulness.

The apostle did not come to Corinth, as was expected, ver. 23. He knew there were things amiss among them, and such as deserved censure, but was desirous to show tenderness. He assures them solemnly this was the true reason. He desired to spare the censures which he feared would be unavoidable, if he had gone before he had learned what effect his former letter had produced. He did not pretend to dominion over their faith, ver. 24. Christ only is the Lord of our faith, he is the Author and Finisher of our faith, Heb. 12. 2. He reveals to us what we must believe. Paul and Apollos, and the rest of the

apostles, were but ministers by whom they believed, 1 Cor. 3. 5, and so the helpers of their joy, the joy of faith. Our strength and ability are owing to faith, and our comfort and joy must flow from faith. Unbelief excludes men from the blessing; and many believers come short of the covenant, because they are distrustful and of little faith. If then we have been established in Christ with the ancient believers, it is God who has done this great thing for us. The holy tempers and gracious fruits which attend our confidence and consolations, secure us from delusion in so important a matter, and distinguish this genuine experience from all the joys of hypocrites, enthusiasts, and apostates.

19. Silvanus is the same as the person called Silas in the Acts.

20. With attention to the articles in the greek original the verse is rendered, "for how many soever be the promises of God, in him (Christ) is the Yea, and in him the Amen," meaning, Whatever God hath promised, he will through Christ assuredly fulfil.—Middleton.

CHAPTER II.

The apostle proceeds to a further account of the reasons of his not coming to the Corinthians, ver. 1—4. He gives directions about restoring the repentant offender to his place in the church, 5—11. And gives an account of his own labours, success, and joy, in spreading the pure gospel of Christ in several places, 12—17.

Ver. 1—4. The apostle had determined not to come to Corinth in heaviness; as he would have done, had he come and found evils among them not duly censured. If he had made them sorry, that would have been sorrow to himself, for there would have been none to have made him glad. But his desire was to have a cheerful meeting with them, and not to have it imbittered by any unhappy occasion of disagreement. He tells them he wrote his former epistle, that he might not have sorrow from them, of whom he ought to rejoice; and that he had written to them in confidence of their doing what was requisite, in order to their benefit and his comfort.

He was encouraged to hope that they would do thus, from his confidence in all who abode in the doctrines of Christ, that their regard and affection to him was sincere, according to their former profession that what occasioned pleasure and delight to him, with reference

to the glory of Christ, and the good of the church, would be so likewise to all of them ; and that therefore they would be glad to remove every cause of disquiet from him.—(82.)

He particularly refers, as appears by the following verses, to the case of the incestuous person, about whom he had written in the first epistle, chap. 5. Nor was the apostle disappointed in his expectation. He assures them that he did not design to grieve them, but to testify his love to them, and that he wrote with much anguish and affliction in his own heart, and with great affection to them. Even in reproofs, admonitions, and acts of discipline, faithful ministers show their love. Needful censures towards offenders, are a grief to tender-spirited ministers, and are administered with much regret. We should always give pain reluctantly, even when it must be done ; for if we feel properly, we cannot but share the heaviness and sorrow which we occasion.

Ver. 5—11. The crime the apostle had noticed, and the connivance of the Corinthians had particularly troubled him ; but he admitted that he had borne only a part of this grief, as many had shared it with him. He was unwilling to lay a heavy charge upon the whole church, especially seeing they had cleared themselves in that matter by observing the directions he had given. He tells them that the punishment inflicted upon this offender was sufficient, ver. 6. The desired effect was obtained, for the man was humbled, and they had shown the proof of their obedience to his directions. He therefore desires them to receive the excommunicated person again into their communion, ver. 7, 8. In many cases the comfort of penitents depends upon their reconciliation, not only with God, but with men also, whom they have scandalized or injured. They should show that their censures proceeded from love to his person, as well as hatred to his sin ; and that their design was to reform, not to ruin him. Or, if his fall had weakened their love to him, so that they could not take satisfaction in him as formerly, yet, now he was recovered by repentance, they must renew and confirm their love to him. The case of the penitent called for this ; for he was so sensible of his fault, and

so much afflicted under his punishment, as to be in great danger of falling into despair, ver. 7. Even sorrow for sin should not be such as to unfit for other duties, and drive to despair. They had showed obedience to the apostle's directions in passing a censure upon the offender, and now he would have them comply with his desire to restore him, ver. 9. He mentions his readiness to forgive this penitent, and to concur with them in this matter, ver. 10. And this he would do for their sakes, for their advantage ; and for Christ's sake, or in his name, as his apostle ; and in conformity to Christ's doctrine and example, which are full of kindness and tender mercy toward all who truly repent. He gives another weighty reason, ver. 11, lest Satan get an advantage against us. Not only was there danger lest Satan should get an advantage against the penitent, by tempting him to hard thoughts of God and religion, and so drive him to despair ; but against the churches also, and the ministers of Christ, by bringing an evil report upon christians as too severe, and unforgiving, thus exciting divisions, and preventing the success of the ministry.

In this, as in other things, wisdom is profitable to direct, to manage according as the case may be, that the ministry may not be blamed for indulging sin on the one hand, or for too great severity toward sinners on the other hand. Satan uses many stratagems to deceive ; and we should not be ignorant of his devices. He is also a watchful adversary, ready to take all advantages ; and we should be very cautious lest we give him any occasion. That subtle enemy knows how to avail himself of our mistakes, whether of ill-timed levity or of needless severity. He buoys up men with presumption, or pushes them to despair. He represents professors as licentious, or as over strict, as appearances vary. He raises contradictory slanders, to prejudice men against the truth, or to destroy the peace of the church. Let us study to get acquainted with his devices by attention to the scriptures, watchfulness over ourselves, conferring with our brethren, and by fervent prayer, so that we may counteract them.

10. The apostle is especially careful to mark that this forgiveness is granted, with explicit reference to Christ, as Possessor of the authority and efficiency to forgive.—*J. P. Smith.*

Ver. 12-17. The apostle gives the Corinthians an account of his travels and labours for the furtherance of the gospel, declaring he had no rest in his spirit, when he found not Titus at Troas, from whom he hoped to have heard more particularly respecting them. And we find afterwards, chap. 7. 5-7, that when he was come into Macedonia, he was comforted by the coming of Titus, and the information he received concerning them. Observe, though he was prevented in his design, as to the place of working, yet he was unwearied in his work. Also note his success in his work. He had an opportunity to open his mouth freely, and God opened the hearts of the hearers, as the heart of Lydia, Acts 16. 14; and the apostle speaks of this as a matter of thankfulness to God, and of rejoicing to his own soul. Thanks be to God, who always causeth us to triumph in Christ, ver. 14. A believer's triumphs are all in Christ. In ourselves we are weak, and have no joy or victory; but in Christ we may rejoice and triumph. And true believers have constant cause of triumph in Christ, for they are more than conquerors through him who hath loved them, Rom. 8. 37. It is God who gives matter for triumph, and hearts to triumph. To him therefore be the praise and glory of all, while the good success of the gospel is a good reason for a christian's joy and rejoicing. The apostle had indeed sharp conflicts to sustain; but the Lord gave such victories, that he went from city to city a triumphant conqueror in the cause of Christ. And, as in triumphs abundance of perfumes and sweet odours were used, so the name and salvation of Jesus, as ointment poured out, was a sweet savour diffused by him in every place.

Thus Paul and his fellow-labourers were pleasing and acceptable to God, by their testimony to Christ, and through his sufferings and merits, as a sweet smelling savour, not only in respect of those who were saved by their means, but even in those that perished. Unto some the gospel is a savour of death unto death. Those who are willingly ignorant, and wilfully obstinate, dislike the gospel. They reject it to their ruin. Unto others the gospel is a savour of life unto life. To humble and gracious souls the preaching of the word is most delightful and profitable. As it is

sweeter than honey to the taste, so it is more grateful than the most precious odours to the senses, and much more profitable; for as it quickened them at first when they were dead in trespasses and sins, so it makes them more lively, and will end in eternal life.

Observe the awful impressions this matter made upon the mind of the apostle, and should also make upon our spirits. Who is sufficient for these things? ver. 16. Who is worthy to be employed in a work of such vast importance? Who is able to perform such a difficult work, that requires so much skill and industry? The work is great, and our strength is small; yea, of ourselves we have no strength at all; all our sufficiency is of God. If men seriously considered what great things depend upon the preaching of the gospel, and how difficult the work of the ministry is, they would be more cautious how they enter on it, and more careful in discharging its duties. The apostle had comfort under this serious consideration—Because faithful ministers shall be accepted of God, whatever their success may be, ver. 15. His conscience witnessed to his faithfulness, ver. 17. Though many corrupted the word of God, yet the apostle's conscience witnessed to his fidelity. He refers to the Corinthian teachers as sophisticating the word of God. They preserved some important truths in their preaching, but corrupted it by human inventions and loose opinions, till it became injurious to the souls of men. But the apostle was not actuated by such principles, nor did he adopt such courses. He spake of Christ and his salvation in every place. He did not mix his own notions with the doctrines and institutions of Christ; he durst not add to, nor diminish from, the word of God; he was faithful in dispensing the gospel, as he received it from the Lord, and had no secular turn to serve; his aim was to approve himself to God, remembering his eye was always upon him; he spake and acted always as in the sight of God, therefore in sincerity. What we do in religion, is not of God, does not come from God, will not reach to God, unless it be done in sincerity, as in the sight of God. He that sincerely loves the truth and the morality of the gospel, is far from altering or corrupting

it, but in order to love it, a man must practise it; as in order to practise it, he must love it. And if a preacher has reason to fear and tremble under a ministry so sacred as this, surely those that hear, should seriously consider whether they reverence, and desire to learn from, the word of God. May we then inquire how the case is with us; may we carefully watch ourselves in this matter; and seek the testimony of our consciences, under the teaching of the Holy Spirit, that as of sincerity, as of God, as in the sight of God, so speak we in Christ and of Christ.

12. *Paley* remarks, that this passage shows that the apostle's labours had been useful at *Troas* in his way to *Macedonia*, while from *Acts 20* we find disciples collected round him there on his return.

14. Here is a reference to the Roman triumph, when captives were shown openly, and the air filled with fragrance. See *T. H. Horne*. The words properly signify to triumph over, to lead about in triumph. When St. Paul represents himself and others, as being led about in triumph, like so many captives, by the power and efficacy of the gospel, grace, and truth, his words imply a contest, a victory, an open show of victory. While God was leading about such men in triumph, he made them very serviceable and successful in promoting the knowledge of Christ; where they went.—*Brakehill*.

15. This is supposed to be an allusion to the different effects of perfumes upon different persons, or rather to the different sensations they would excite in the case of a triumph, in those who were conquerors, and in the captives, who frequently were put to death after the procession.

17. "For we do not, like many, (or most,) corrupt."—*Scholefield*.

CHAPTER XI.

The apostle appeals to the Corinthians for the good effects of his ministry upon them, the glory of which he ascribes entirely to God, ver. 1-5. The preference of the gospel to the legal administration is shown, 6-11. And that his preaching was suitable to its excellency and evidence, and had an enlightening, transforming efficacy, through the power of the Holy Ghost, 12-18.

Ver. 1-5. The opponents of the apostle censure the preceding declaration as self-commendation, but could he be suspected of such motives? Even the appearance of self-commendation and courting human applause, is painful to the humble and spiritual mind. He tells the Corinthians that he neither needed nor desired any commendation to them, nor testimonial from them, as some others did, meaning the false apostles or

teachers. The apostles' ministry among them had, without controversy, been truly great and honourable, how contemptible soever some would have thought it to be. The Corinthians themselves were their real commendation; and a good testimonial, that God was with them of a truth, that they were sent of God, ver. 2. Nothing is more delightful to faithful ministers, or more to their commendation, than the success of their ministry as evidenced in the hearts and lives of those among whom they labour. Professors of gospel truth should remember that their tempers and conduct are considered to exhibit the tendency of the doctrine and ministry on which they attend.

The apostle is careful not to assume too much, but ascribes all the praise to God. They were the epistle of Christ, ver. 3. The apostle and others were but instruments, Christ was the author of all the good in them. The law of Christ was written in their hearts, and the love of Christ shed abroad in their hearts. This epistle was not written with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; nor was it written in tables of stone, as the law of God given to Moses, but on the heart; and that heart not a stony one, but a heart of flesh. Upon the fleshy (not fleshly, as fleshliness denotes sensuality) tables of the heart, upon hearts that are softened and renewed by Divine grace, according to that gracious promise, I will take away the stony heart, and I will give you a heart of flesh, *Ezek. 36. 26*. This good hope the apostle had concerning these Corinthians, ver. 4, that their hearts were like the ark of the covenant, containing the tables of the law and the gospel, written with the finger, that is, by the Spirit, of the living God; their hearts having been humbled, and softened to receive this impression by the new-creating power of the Holy Spirit. He utterly disclaims taking any praise to themselves, and ascribes all the glory to God; We are not sufficient of ourselves, ver. 5. Such is our weakness, such is our inability, that we cannot of ourselves think a good thought, much less raise good thoughts or affections in other men. All our sufficiency is of God; to him therefore are owing all the praise and glory of that good which is done, and from him we must receive

grace and strength to do more. This is true concerning ministers and all christians; the best are no more than what the grace of God makes them. We are not sufficient of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God; and his grace is sufficient for us, to furnish us for every good word and work. The apostles made no estimation of themselves in this great concern, but were deeply sensible that all their sufficiency was of God. And we should always remember that as our whole dependence is upon the Lord, so the whole glory belongs to him alone.

Ver. 6—11. Here the apostle makes a comparison between the old testament (or rather covenant) and the new, the law of Moses and the gospel of Jesus Christ; and asserts of himself and his fellow-labourers, that God had made them able ministers of the new testament, ver. 6. Thus he answers the accusations of false teachers, who magnified greatly the law of Moses. 1. They were ministers, not merely of the letter, to read the written word, or to preach the letter of the gospel only, but they were ministers of the Spirit also; the Spirit of God accompanied their ministrations. The letter killeth, this the letter of the law does, for that is the ministration of death; and if we rest only in the letter of the gospel, we shall never be the better for so doing, for even that will be a savour of death unto death; but the Holy Spirit, going with the ministry of the gospel, gives life, spiritual, and life eternal. 2. He shows the difference between the old testament and the new, and the excellency of the gospel above the law. Yet the legal dispensation was not a killing letter to all that were under it; nor is the gospel in all cases attended by the life-giving Spirit. But the law derived all its efficacy from the gospel to which it referred, while the gospel itself and its ministers are a savour of death to unbelievers, who often make the same formal use of evangelical truths and christian ordinances as the Jews did of the rites of the law.

The old testament dispensation was the ministration of death, ver. 7; that of the new testament is the ministration of life. The law discovered sin, and the wrath and curse of God; that showed us a God above us, and a God against us; but the gospel discovers grace, and

Emmanuel, God with us. Upon this account the gospel is more glorious than the law; and yet that had glory in it, witness the shining of Moses' face, when he came down from the mount. The Israelites could not steadfastly look at it, which caused him to wear a vail in their presence. This represented the glory of that dispensation, which was to be abolished by the introduction of the new covenant in Christ. The law was the ministration of condemnation, for it condemned every one who continued not in all things written therein, to do them; but the gospel is the ministration of righteousness. Therein the righteousness of God by faith is revealed; this shows us that the just shall live by his faith; this reveals the grace and mercy of God through Jesus Christ, for obtaining the remission of sins and eternal life. The gospel so much exceeds in glory, that it eclipses the glory of the legal dispensation, ver. 10. As the shining of a burning lamp is lost, or not regarded, when the sun arises, and goes forth in his strength; so there was no glory in the old testament, in comparison with that of the new. The law is done away, but the gospel does and shall remain, ver. 11. Not only did the glory of Moses' face go away, but the glory of Moses' law is done away also; that dispensation was only to continue for a time, whereas the gospel shall remain unto the end of the world. Observe, even the new testament will be a killing letter if exhibited as a mere system or form, and without dependence on God the Holy Spirit, to give it quickening energy. Yet the holy law, though excellent and glorious in itself, can only be held forth as the ministration of condemnation to fallen man; but justifying righteousness and sanctifying grace come from Jesus Christ. This gracious revelation far exceeds all preceding dispensations in glory. May christians learn to value the faithful ministry of the gospel.

6 "Who also hath fitted us to be ministers," —Schleierfeld.

7 The ministration of death by the letter, engraven in stones. —Schleierfeld.

Ver. 12—18. In these verses are two inferences from what the apostle had said about the old and new testament.

1. As to the duty of the ministers

of the gospel to use great plainness, or clearness of speech. They ought not to obscure and darken those things which they should make plain. The things of God are revealed in the new testament, not in types and shadows; and ministers are to set spiritual things, and gospel truth and grace, in the clearest light. Though the Israelites could not, yet we may look stedfastly to the end of what was commanded, but is now abolished. We may see the meaning of those types and shadows by the accomplishment, seeing the veil is done away in Christ; and He is come, who was the end of the law for righteousness to all these who believe, and to whom Moses and the prophets pointed. Even believers had only indistinct and transient glimpses of that glorious Saviour, and unbelievers looked no further than to the outward institution.

The law was veiled under types and shadows; but the gospel has scarcely any ceremonies; baptism and the Lord's supper, being all that can properly be called such; and, believe, love, obey, the great precepts of the gospel, are delivered as clearly as possible. And indeed the whole doctrine of Christ crucified is made as plain as human language can make it.—(99.)

2. Concerning the privilege and advantage of those who enjoy the gospel, above those who lived under the law. For those who lived under the legal dispensation, had their minds blinded, ver. 14, and there was a veil upon their hearts, ver. 15. Thus it was formerly, and so it was especially as to those remaining in judaism, since the coming of the Messiah, and the publication of his gospel. Nevertheless, the apostle tells us there is a time coming, when this veil also shall be taken away, and where it, the body of that people, shall turn to the Lord, ver. 16. Also when any person is converted to God, then the veil of ignorance is taken away; the blindness of the mind, and the hardness of the heart are cured. The veil is only done away in Christ; the doctrines concerning him tend to remove it from the written word; but faith in him, and union with him, by the supply of his Spirit must remove it from the heart. The condition of those who enjoy and believe the gospel is much more happy, for they have liberty; Where the Spirit

of the Lord is, there is liberty, ver. 17; freedom from the yoke of the ceremonial law, and from the servitude of corruption; liberty of access to God, and freedom in prayer. The heart is set at liberty, and enlarged to run the ways of God's commandments. They have light, for with open face we behold the glory of the Lord, ver. 18. The Israelites saw the glory of God in a cloud, which was dark and dreadful; but christians see the glory of the Lord as in a mirror, more clearly and comfortably. It was the peculiar privilege of Moses to have God converse with him; but now all true christians see him more clearly; He showeth them his glory. This light and this liberty are transforming; we are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, from one degree of glorious grace unto another, till grace here is completed in glory for ever. How much therefore should christians prize and improve these privileges! We should not rest contented without experimental knowledge of the transforming power of the gospel, by the operation of the Spirit bringing us into conformity to the temper and tendency of the glorious gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and into union with Him. For this union with Christ is effected by the indwelling of his Holy Spirit, whereby the soul is new created, and grows in holiness, till at length the work will be perfected.

Here is a beautiful contrast; Moses saw the Shechinah, or glory of the Lord, and it rendered his face resplendent, so that he covered it with a veil, the jews not being able to bear the reflected light. We behold Christ, as in the glass of his word, and as the reflection from a mirror causes the face to shine, the faces of christians shine also. They are not to veil them, but to diffuse the lustre, which as we discover more and more of the glories of Christ in the gospel, is continually increasing.—(80.)

May we always remember, that the Lord Jesus is the life and soul of the scriptures and of all true religion. And that the transformation of the soul into conformity to Christ, is the proper evidence and test of spiritual illumination. May our understandings be enlightened fully to behold the glorious object of our faith, hope, love, and imitation, and to point him out to others.

14. *Shuttleworth* thinks there is here an allusion to the vails still worn in the Jewish synagogues, while the law is recited.

17. "Now the Lord is the Spirit."—*Scholefield*.

CHAPTER IV.

The apostle, animated by consideration of the excellence and power of the gospel-ministry, declares that he and his fellow-labourers discharged it with unwearied diligence, sincerity, and faithfulness, though not with equal success to all, ver. 1-7. That their sufferings for it were exceedingly great, and yet attended with rich supports, and various advantages, 8-12. And that their prospects of eternal glory were their chief preservative from fainting under their tribulations, 13-18.

Ver. 1-7. The apostle and his fellow-labourers having such a glorious and excellent ministry intrusted to them, and being sensible of the abundant mercy shown to themselves, did not faint in their work, or draw back because of the difficulties they had to encounter. As it is great mercy and grace to be called to be saints, and especially to be counted faithful, and to be put into the ministry, 1 Tim. 1. 12, so it is owing to the mercy and grace of God that we continue faithful, and persevere in our work with diligence. The best of men would faint if they did not receive mercy from God. And that mercy which has helped us out, and helped us on, hitherto, we may rely upon to help us even to the end. Their sincerity in their work is avouched in several expressions. The things of dishonesty are hidden things, that will not bear the light; and those who practise them, are, or should be, ashamed of them. Such things the apostle did not allow, but renounced and avoided with indignation. Not walking in craftiness, or in disguise, acting with art and cunning, but in simplicity, and with freedom. They had no base and wicked designs, covered with fair and specious pretences. They used great plainness of speech, and did not try to make their ministry serve a turn. The apostles manifested the truth to every man's conscience, declaring nothing but what in their own consciences they believed to be true, and might serve to convict the consciences of those who heard them. And all this they did as in the sight of God, desiring to commend themselves to God, and to the consciences of men, by

their sincerity. Steadfast adherence to the truths of the gospel will commend ministers and people; and sincerity or uprightness will preserve the favourable opinion of wise and good men.

But the gospel is hid, and proves ineffectual, to some who hear it. The apostle shows that this was not the fault of the gospel, nor of the preachers. These are lost souls, to whom the gospel is hid, or is ineffectual. The god of this world hath blinded their minds, ver. 4. They are under the influence and power of Satan, so called because of the great sway that he bears in the world. And as he is the prince of darkness, and ruler of the darkness of this world, so he darkens the understandings of men, blinding their minds with ignorance, and error, and prejudices, that they should not behold the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God. Observe, Christ's design by his gospel, is, to make a glorious discovery of God to the minds of men. Thus, as the Image of God, he demonstrates the power and wisdom of God, and the grace and mercy of God for their salvation. But the design of the devil is, to keep men in ignorance; and when he cannot keep the light of the gospel out of the world, he endeavours to keep it out of the hearts of men. Vast multitudes of Satan's subjects are wholly kept from hearing the gospel; others hear, but are blinded by the tempter to oppose or reject it. His great design is to keep out this transforming light; but many who for a season were blinded have at length been converted, while others are still blinded to their perdition. Satan's main opposition is always made to the personal and mediatorial glory of Christ; he therefore spares no pains to keep men from the gospel, or to set them against it.

The rejection of the gospel is here traced to its proper cause. If it is veiled or hid from those who hear it, so that they complain of its mysterious doctrines, and continue blind to its glory and suitableness, it is not owing to any want of fitness in the terms employed to announce it, or to any deficiency of proof, or to any defect in the qualification of the teachers. It is not to be ascribed to any want of interest in the subject, or want of capacity to receive it, or to any deficiency in its

promises and invitations, but to the wilful blindness and perversity of the human heart, which refuses to abandon its sinful courses, its self-righteous hopes, its proud reasonings, and to submit to the humbling and purifying doctrines of the cross.—(87.)

A proof of the integrity of the apostles is given, ver. 5. They made it their business to preach Christ, and not themselves; We preach not ourselves. Self was not the matter or the end of the apostles' preaching; they did not set forth their own notions and private opinions, nor their passions and prejudices, as the word and will of God. Nor did they seek to advance their own secular interest or glory; but they preached Christ Jesus the Lord; and this became them, as being Christ's servants.

They proclaim him as Jesus, the Saviour and Deliverer, who saves men from their sins; and they proclaim Jesus of Nazareth to be the long expected Messiah, and that there will be none other. And further, they proclaim this Jesus the Messiah to be the Lord, the great Ruler, who has power in heaven and earth; who made and governs the world; and who can save to the uttermost all that come to God through him. Such was the Redeemer preached by St. Paul—(11.)

All the lines of christian doctrine centre in Christ; and in preaching Christ, ministers preach all they should preach. As to ourselves, says the apostle, we preach, or declare, that we are your servants, for Jesus' sake. This was a real profession of readiness to do good to their souls, and to promote their spiritual and eternal interest; not for their own advantage, but for Christ's sake, that they might imitate his great example, and advance his glory. Ministers, who are servants to the souls of men, should not lord it over God's heritage; yet they must avoid the meanness of spirit, implied in becoming servants of the humours or the lusts of men. If they thus seek to please men, they are not servants of Christ, Gal. 1. 10.

There was good reason,

1. Why they should preach Christ. For by the gospel light we have the knowledge of the glory of God, which shines in the face of Jesus Christ, ver. 6. And the light of this Sun of righteousness, is more glorious than that

light which God commanded to shine out of darkness. It is pleasant to behold the sun in the firmament; but it is more pleasant and profitable, when the gospel shines in the heart. As light was the beginning of the first creation, so it is in the new creation: the illumination of the Spirit is his first work upon the soul. The grace of God created such a light in the soul, that those who were sometimes darkness, were made light in the Lord, Eph. 5. 8. Without this enlightening the soul will remain a dark, confused, deformed chaos, when science has done its utmost; nor can the knowledge of God, and of Christ, which is eternal life, be obtained in any other way.

2. Why they should not preach themselves; it was because they were but earthen vessels; things of little or no worth or value. Here seems to be an allusion to the lamps which Gideon's soldiers carried in earthen pitchers, Judges 7. 16. The treasure of gospel light and grace is put into earthen vessels. The ministers of the gospel are weak and frail creatures, subject to like passions and infirmities as other men; they are mortal, and soon broken in pieces. And God has so ordered it, that the weaker the vessels are, the stronger his power may appear to be, that the treasure itself should be valued the more. There is an excellency of power in the gospel of Christ, to enlighten the mind, to convince the conscience, to convert the soul, and to rejoice the heart; but all this power is from God the Author, and not from men, who are but instruments, so that God must be glorified in all things. God could have sent angels to proclaim the glorious doctrine of the gospel, or could have put this treasure in more splendid vessels, by sending the most eminent and admired sons of men to instruct the nations, but he chose humbler, weaker vessels, that his power might be glorified in their preservation, and in the blessed change wrought by their ministry.

Ver. 8—12. The apostles were great sufferers. Christ had told them, that in the world they should have tribulation; yet they met with wonderful support, great relief, and many allays of their sorrows. We are, says the apostle, afflicted many ways; yet not shut up as

without a way of escape, because we can see help in God, and help from God, and have liberty of access to God. Again, We are perplexed, often uncertain what will become of us; yet not in despair, ver. 8, even in the greatest perplexities; knowing that God is able to support and to deliver, and in him we always place our trust and hope. Again, We are persecuted by men, pursued with hatred and violence, as men not worthy to live; yet not forsaken of God, ver. 9. Believers may be sometimes forsaken of their friends, as well as persecuted by enemies; but their God will never leave them nor forsake them. Again, We are sometimes dejected, or cast down; the enemy may in a great measure prevail, and our spirits begin to fail: there may be fears within, as well as fightings without; yet we are not destroyed, ver. 9. Whatever condition the children of God may be in, in this world, they have a support; their case sometimes is bad, yea very bad, but not so bad as it might be. The apostle speaks of their sufferings as constant, and as a counterpart of the sufferings of Christ, ver. 10. Thus did they bear about the dying of the Lord Jesus in their bodies, setting before the world the great example of a suffering Christ, that the life of Jesus might also be made manifest, that people might see the power of Christ's resurrection, and the efficacy of grace in and from the living Jesus, manifested in and toward those, who yet were alive, though always delivered to death, ver. 11: and though death worked in them, ver. 12, they being exposed to death, and ready to be swallowed up by death continually. Thus great were the sufferings of the apostles, that, in comparison with them, other christians were, even at that time, in prosperous circumstances. Death worketh in us; but life in you, ver. 12.

Ver. 13—18. Whatever the burdens and troubles of believers may be, they have cause not to faint. Faith kept the apostle from fainting; that faith which is of the operation of the Spirit; the same faith by which saints of old did and suffered such great things, ver. 13. The grace of faith is an effectual antidote against fainting in troublous times. The spirit of faith will go far to bear up the spirit of a man under his infirmities; and as the apostle had David's example

to imitate, who said, Ps. 116. 10, I have believed, and therefore have I spoken, so he leaves us his own example to imitate; We also believe, says he, and therefore speak. As we receive help and encouragement from the good words and examples of others, so we should be careful to give a good example to others.

Hope of the resurrection kept them from sinking, ver. 14. They knew that Christ was raised, and that his resurrection was an earnest and assurance of theirs. This had been treated of largely in his former epistle to these Corinthians, chap. 15. And therefore their hope was firm, being well grounded, that he who raised up Christ the Head, will also raise up all his members. The hope of the resurrection will encourage us in a suffering day, and set us above the fear of death; for what reason has a true christian to fear death, who dies in hope of a joyful resurrection? Also consideration of the glory of God and the benefit of the church, by means of their sufferings, kept them from fainting, ver. 15. Their sufferings were for the advantage of the church, and thus redounded to God's glory. For when the church is edified, then God is glorified; and we may bear sufferings patiently and cheerfully, when we see others are the better for them—if they are instructed and edified, if they are confirmed and comforted. The sufferings of Christ's ministers, as well as their preaching and conversation, are intended for the good of the church and the glory of God.

The thoughts of the advantage their souls would reap by the sufferings of their bodies, kept them from fainting. Every one has an outward and an inward man, a body and a soul. If the outward man perish, there is no remedy: it must and will be so, it was made to perish. But it is our happiness if the decays of the outward man contribute to the renewing the inward man; if afflictions outwardly are gain to us inwardly; if, when the body is sick, weak, and perishing, the soul is vigorous and prosperous. The best of men need further renewing of the inward man, even day by day. Where the good work is begun, there is more work to be done, for carrying it forward. And, as in wicked men things grow every day worse and worse, so in godly men they grow better and better. The prospect of eternal life and

happiness kept them from fainting, and was their support and comfort.

The apostle and his fellow-sufferers saw their afflictions working toward heaven, and that there they would end, ver. 17, whereupon they, as it were, put the heavenly glory in one scale, and their earthly sufferings in the other; and, pondering things in their thoughts, they found the afflictions to be light, and the glory of heaven to be a far more exceeding weight. That which sense was ready to pronounce heavy and long, grievous and tedious, faith perceived to be light and short, but for a moment. On the other hand, the worth and weight of the crown of glory far exceeded all the expressions and thought of the believing soul; and it will be a very special support in our sufferings, when we perceive them appointed as the way, and preparing us for the enjoyment of future glory. Compared with that the weight of all temporal afflictions was lightness itself; and earthly prosperity was mere vanity and emptiness, and worthlessness. While the glory was substantial, weighty, and durable beyond any description; human language could not convey sufficient ideas of it. It would have been even an insupportable weight till their bodies and souls were prepared by Omnipotence to sustain it. It was a weight of glory, a fulness of God; a measure of knowledge, holiness and happiness in his favour, and according to his excellence, adequate to whatever they should be made capable of possessing and enjoying, and all this unchangeable and eternal. If the apostle could call his heavy and long continued trials, light, and but for a moment, what must our trifling difficulties appear in the estimate of faith and grace!

Their faith enabled them to make this right judgment of things; We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen, ver. 18. By faith we see God, who is invisible, Heb. 11, 27, and by that we look to an unseen heaven and hell, and faith is the evidence of things not seen. There are unseen things, as well as things that are seen. And there is this vast difference between them—unseen things are eternal, seen things but temporal, or temporary only. By faith we not only discern these things, and the great difference between them, but thereby also we

make unseen things our end and scope; not to escape present evils, and obtain present good, both of which are temporal and transitory; but to escape future evil, and obtain future good things, which, though unseen, are real, certain, and eternal; and faith is the substance of things hoped for, as well as the evidence of things not seen, Heb. 11, 1. The final happiness of believers, and the final misery of the wicked, give incomparable importance to unseen things.

May we seek to have all our light and momentary afflictions sanctified to us; that by promoting our humility, our spirituality, and the admiring love of God our Saviour, they may work for us a far more exceeding and an eternal weight of glory. Let us then look off from the things which are seen; let us cease to seek for worldly advantages, or to fear present distresses. Let us take warning to flee from the wrath to come, and give diligence to ensure future happiness, for the things which are seen are temporal, and the things which are not seen are eternal.

13 "But having"—*Scholefeld*

17. This sentence is one of the most emphatic in the writings of the apostle. *Blackwell* says it cannot be adequately expressed by any translation. It signifies that all hyperboles fall short of describing that weighty, eternal glory, so solid and lasting, that you may pass from one hyperbole to another, yet the utmost is far below the reality.

CHAPTER V.

The apostle, in further setting forth the grounds of his, and his brethren's not fainting under their troubles, insists on their assured hope, and earnest desire of heavenly glory, ver. 1—8. Shows how they were excited thereby to diligence in their work, 9—11. Gives the reasons of his seeming to commend himself, and of his being so affected with zeal for the Corinthians who were mostly gentile converts, on account of which the Jewish zealots censured him as, though he were beside himself, 12—15. And shows the necessity of regeneration, and of reconciliation with God through Jesus Christ, the ministry of which was committed to him and his brethren, 16—21.

Ver. 1—8. The apostle mentions their expectation, and desire, and assurance, of eternal happiness after death.

1. The believer's expectation of eternal happiness after death, ver. 1. He not only is well assured by faith that there is another and a happy life after

this is ended; but he has good hope, through grace, of his interest in that everlasting blessedness of the unseen world. A believer looks upon heaven as a dwelling-place, a resting-place, a hiding-place; our Father's house, where are many mansions, and our everlasting home; whose Builder and Maker is God, and therefore it is worthy of its Author; the happiness of the future state is what God hath prepared for them that love him: it is eternal in the heavens, everlasting habitations, not like the earthly tabernacles, the poor cottages of clay, in which our souls now dwell, that are mouldering and decaying, whose foundations are in the dust. The body, this earthly house, is but a tabernacle, that must be dissolved shortly. When this takes place, then the spirit returns unto God who gave it; and all such as have walked with God here, shall dwell with God for ever. It is indeed most animating to know amidst all our trials and in the prospect of death, that whenever we die we shall be admitted to eternal happiness in heaven; but our prevailing hope, or assurance of this, must be in proportion to the evidence of our conversion.

The contrast here between a tabernacle, or a tent erected for a shelter for a time, and a house, or permanent abode, is very striking.—(30)

2. The believer's earnest desire after this future blessedness, is expressed by a word denoting the groaning of sorrow under a heavy load. The body of flesh is a heavy burden, the calamities of life are a heavy load. But believers groan, because burdened with a body of sin, and the many corruptions remaining and raging within them. This makes them complain, O wretched man that I am! Rom. 7. 24. There is a groaning of desire after the happiness of another life; and thus believers groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with the house which is from heaven; to obtain a blessed immortality, that mortality might be swallowed up of life; that being found clothed, we shall not be naked; that, if it were the will of God, we might not sleep, but be changed; for it is not desirable in itself to be unclothed. Death, considered merely as a separation of soul and body, is not to be desired, but dreaded rather; yet, considered as a passage to glory,

the believer is willing rather to die than live, to be absent from the body, that he may be present with the Lord, to leave this body, that he may go to Christ, and to put off these rags of mortality, that he may put on the robes of glory. Death will strip us of the clothing of flesh, and all the comforts of life, as well as put an end to all our troubles here below. But believing souls are not found naked in the other world, they are clothed with garments of praise, with robes of righteousness and glory. They shall be delivered out of all their troubles, and shall have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, Rev. 7. 14.

3. The believer has assurance of his interest in this future blessedness from the experience of the grace of God, in preparing and making him meet for this blessedness. He that hath wrought us for the self-same thing, is God, ver. 5. All designed for heaven hereafter, are wrought or prepared for heaven while they are here; the stones of that spiritual building and temple above, are fashioned here below. And he that hath wrought us for this, is God; nothing less than Divine power can make a soul partaker of Divine nature. Also it was the earnest of the Spirit that gave this assurance; an earnest is part of payment, and secures the full payment. The present graces and comforts of the Spirit are earnest of everlasting grace and comfort. These desires and affections are the earnest of the Spirit, and the first fruits of eternal happiness.

The apostle makes an inference for the comfort of believers in their present state and condition in this world.

They are absent from the Lord, ver. 6; they do but sojourn in their earthly home, in this tabernacle. And though God is with us here, by his Spirit, and in his ordinances, yet we are not with him as we hope to be. We cannot see his face while we live; For we walk by faith, not by sight, ver. 7. We have not the vision and fruition of God, as of an object present with us, and as we hope for hereafter, when we shall see as we are seen. Faith is for this world, and sight is reserved for the other world. It is our duty, and will be our interest, to walk by faith, till we live by sight. True christians, if they duly consider the prospect faith gives of another

world, and the good reasons of their hope of blessedness after death, would be comforted under the troubles of life, and supported in the hour of death. They should take courage, and be willing rather to die than live, when it is the will of God they should put off this tabernacle. As those who are born from above long to be there, so it is but being absent from the body, and we shall be present with the Lord; but to die, and be with Christ; but to close our eyes to all things in this world, and we shall open them in a world of glory. Faith will be turned into sight. This is decisive concerning the happiness to be enjoyed by the souls of believers when absent from the body; also that they will possess happiness in the place where Jesus displays his glorious presence.

We are related to the body and to the Lord; one claims an interest in us, and so does the other. What mighty pleadings does the case admit, on the one hand, and on the other! And though the body cannot dictate or utter words, nature pleads more strongly than words. But how much more powerfully the Lord pleads for having the soul of the believer closely united with himself! Thou art one of the souls I have loved and chosen, which were given to me, and for which I offered up my own soul. I have visited thee in thy low and abject state; have inspired thee with a heavenly, sacred, divine life, the root and growing principle of a perfect, glorious, eternal life. Let this body drop which has been long thy burden; let it fall and die, it matters not! Yet since thou lovest it, know that I will restore it again, pure and glorious, like my own! I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live, John 11. 25. Never fear to venture thyself with me, nor to commit thy body to my care. —This matter will be estimated as the temper of the soul is. An earthly, sordid soul will adopt the answer of the Shunammite, 2 Kings 4. 13, which, in her case, expressed the greatness of a contented mind, but in this case what is meant indeed, I am well where I am, and dwell among a people like myself. So says the degenerate, abject soul, sunk into deep forgetfulness of its own country. With this sort of people, each charms the other, and they are loth to

part. But would not a heavenly, new-born soul say, No, this is none of my country, I seek a better. I indeed love this body well, but what is it as an object of love, in comparison of being with the Lord? What is death to me as an object of fear, in comparison of being absent from the Lord? A death infinitely more deadly than the other! —(40)

1—4. The expressions here used have reference to Jewish ideas and doctrines. The Hebrew word, "to be clothed," signifies to be surrounded, covered, or invested with any thing, and the word "house" often signifies a case or clothing. Thus "the house of the face" is a veil, &c. They attribute garments to the soul, both in this and the other world; and say that the design of God in sending souls into the world is, that they may get themselves a garment by the study of the law and good works. By this garment of the soul they mean also the image of God, or being made holy—the image which Adam and all his posterity have lost, and of which being now deprived, they may be said to be naked.—*Schoetgen. See Twissend.*

8 In referring to the words here used in the original, *Houze* says. The apostle considers himself while in the body as living among such a sort of people as dwell in bodies, a like sort of people to himself, and would be no longer a home-dweller with these, but travel away from them, to join and be a dweller with another people. For he considers, "with the Lord," an invisible world where he resides, and an incorporeal people he presides over. So that the case here is—are we willing to be dispeopled from this bodily sort of people, and peopled with that incorporeal sort, the world and community of spirits?

Ver. 9—11. The apostle quickens himself and others to acts of duty. Well-grounded hopes of heaven will not give encouragement to sloth and sinful security; on the contrary, they stir us up to use the greatest care and diligence in religion; Wherefore, or because we hope to be present with the Lord, we labour and take pains. We are ambitious, and labour as industriously as the most ambitious to obtain what they aim at.

The apostle was thus ambitious of acceptance with God. We labour, that, living and dying, whether present in the body, or absent from the body, we may be accepted of him, the Lord, ver. 9, that we may please Him who hath chosen us. They coveted not the honours of the world, but acceptance with the Lord, in respect of their persons, ministry, and labours. They had further quickening motives from consideration of the judgment to come. The certainty of this judgment, For we must appear; the universality of it, For we must all appear;

the great Judge, before whose judgment we must appear, even the Lord Jesus Christ; the recompense for things done in the body, which will be particular unto every one, and just, according to what we have done. So that the justified believer, who from love to Christ has done good, faithfully and uprightly, will receive an abundant, gracious recompense of his believing, though imperfect services; but all impenitent transgressors will be punished according to their crimes.

The apostle calls this awful judgment, the terror of the Lord. Knowing what terrible vengeance the Lord would execute upon the workers of iniquity, the apostle and his brethren used every argument and persuasion, to induce men of every age and nation to believe in the Lord Jesus, and to act as his disciples. In this earnest endeavour, the motives and intentions of their hearts were manifest to God, and approved of him, whatever the passions or prejudices of some at Corinth might lead them to consider.

While others labour for worldly riches, and are ambitious of honour from man, let us aspire after the glory of being accepted of Christ in all our services during life, and of being received into his joy when we leave the world. Let us be impartial in judging ourselves, and especially let us carefully acquaint ourselves with him as our Saviour, who will shortly be manifested as our Judge; that by his grace we may do those good things which he will recompense, as the fruits and evidences of saving faith, in that solemn and decisive day.

Ver. 12—15. It was not for self commendation, or for their own sakes, that the apostle had spoken of their fidelity and diligence; nor was he willing to suspect their good opinion of him. But it was to put an argument in their mouths, wherewith to answer his accusers, who made vain boastings, and gloried in appearances only. And if the people can say that the word has been manifested to their consciences, and been effectual to their conversion and edification, this is the best defence they can make of the ministry of the word, when it is vilified and reproached. Their zeal and diligence was for the glory of God, and the good of the church. Whether we be beside ourselves, or whe-

ther we be sober, whether you or others may think the one or the other, it is to God, and for his glory; and it is for your cause, or to promote your good, ver. 13. If they manifested the greatest ardour and vehemency, or used the greatest calmness in strong reasonings, it was for the best ends; in both they had good reason for what they did, ver. 14. Love has a constraining power to excite ministers and private christians in their duty. Our love to Christ will have this virtue; and Christ's love to us, which was manifested in this great instance of his dying for us, will have this effect upon us, if duly considered and rightly judged. If earnestness to prevent the delusion and destruction of our fellow-sinners, and for the great concerns of the eternal world, brings upon us the charge of being beside ourselves, we need only inquire whether our conduct is warranted by the word of God, and springs from regard to his authority and glory.

The apostle declares what we were, and must have continued to be, had not Christ died for us. We were dead. If one died for all, then were all dead; dead in law, under sentence of death; dead in sins and trespasses, spiritually dead. All were lost and undone, dead and ruined, enslaved to sin, and utterly devoid of power to deliver themselves, and must have remained thus miserable for ever, if Christ had not died. And see what such should do, for whom Christ died; namely, they should live to him. Christ designed, that they who are made alive unto God by means of his death, should live to him that died for them, and rose again, for their sakes, and that they should not live to themselves, ver. 15. From that period they should no longer live according to their carnal inclinations as they had done. We should not make ourselves, but Christ, the end of our living and actions; and it was one end of Christ's death, to cure us of this self-love, and to excite us always to act under the commanding influence of his love. A christian's life should be consecrated to Christ; we live as we ought to live, when we live to Christ, who died for us; when we disregard all contrary or interfering objects, that we may show our love to our gracious Lord and Saviour. If our judgment concerning our lost estate as sinners, and the love of

Christ as dying for our salvation, is like that of the apostle, we shall feel, in proportion to our faith and hope, the constraining influence of his love, powerfully exciting us to live to him, who died for us, and rose again! Alas, how many show the worthlessness of their professed faith and love, by living to themselves and to the world!

14. "Bears us away," like a strong and resistless torrent.—*Doddridge*

— "Then all died."—*Scholefield*. He shows that to this translation, as a translation, no objection can possibly be made. The argument it presents is this: All believers died with Christ, and are made conformable to his death, and spiritually partakers of it, Gal. 2. 20, but as having died with him they also rose with him, Rom. 6. 5, and thus living a spiritual life by virtue of his death and resurrection, they do not live to themselves, but to Christ. In this way the love of Christ constrains them. The whole subject is more fully opened in Rom. 6. 1—11.

Ver. 16—21. The apostle here mentions two things necessary in order to our living to Christ, both of which are the consequences of Christ's dying for us—regeneration and reconciliation.

1. Regeneration, which consists in being weaned from the world; Henceforth we do not own or affect any person or thing in this world for carnal ends and outward advantage; we are enabled, by Divine grace, not to mind or regard this world, or the things of the world, but to live above it. The love of Christ is in our hearts, and the world is under our feet. Believers must enjoy the comforts of this life, and their relations in this world, with holy indifference. Even the bodily presence of Christ was not to be desired or dwelt upon by his disciples. We must live upon his spiritual presence, and the inward comfort it affords.

Also regeneration consists in a thorough change of the heart. For if any man be a christian indeed, and will approve himself such, he is, or he must be, a new creature, ver. 17. This ought to be the care of all who profess the christian faith, that they are new creatures. Not only that they have a new name, and make a new profession, but that they have a new heart and new nature. And so great is the change the grace of God makes in the soul of man, that old thoughts, old principles, and old practices, are passed away; these things must become new. Regeneration

creating grace creates a new world in the soul; all things are new. The renewed man acts from new principles, by new rules, with new ends, and in new company.

Not only is he reformed, or formed anew, but he is created anew; his heart is not merely rectified, but a new heart is implanted. His understanding is enlightened, his affections are sanctified, his will is brought into subjection to the law of Christ, his conversation, pursuits, and manner of life are changed. He is born again of the Spirit, through the incorruptible seed of the word. He is the workmanship of God, created in Christ Jesus unto good works. He who was dead in sins is quickened to spiritual life. Though the same as a man, he exhibits a moral aspect entirely different. These expressions must and do mean more than an outward reformation. Every high thought is cast down, and as a little child, he sits at the feet of Jesus to learn his word. All manner of sin is forsaken, and every grace of the Spirit is sought after and cultivated. Formerly he saw no beauty in the Saviour that he should desire him, now, he loves him supremely.—(87.)

2. Reconciliation; which is here spoken of as an unquestionable privilege, ver. 18, 19. Reconciliation supposes a quarrel, or breach of friendship; and sin has broken the friendship between God and man. The heart of the sinner is filled with enmity against God, and God is justly offended with the sinner. Yet there may be a reconciliation. Our offended God is willing to be reconciled.

And observe, he has appointed the Mediator of reconciliation—Jesus Christ. He has reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, ver. 18. God is to be owned from first to last in the undertaking and performance of the Mediator. All things relating to our reconciliation by Jesus Christ, are of God, who by the mediation of Jesus Christ has reconciled the world to himself, and placed himself so as to be actually reconciled to offenders, without any wrong or injury to his justice or holiness; and does not impute to men their trespasses. He is willing to enter into a new covenant of grace, and freely to forgive us all our sins, to justify freely by his grace all believers. When sinners are brought to him as in Christ reconciling the

world to himself, in humble faith, he no more imputes any of their trespasses to them, but blots out all by a full and free forgiveness. In the person of Immanuel, in his mediation and atonement, who was made sin for us, though he knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him, the foundation of this reconciliation was laid.

He has appointed the ministry of reconciliation, ver. 18. By the inspiration of God the scriptures were written, which contain the word of reconciliation; showing that peace was made by the blood of the cross, that reconciliation is wrought, and directing us how we may be interested therein. And he has appointed a ministry of reconciliation; ministers are to proclaim to sinners the terms of mercy and reconciliation, and persuade them to comply therewith.

Reconciliation is here spoken of as our indispensable duty, ver. 20. And it is the great end and design of the gospel, that word of reconciliation, to prevail upon sinners to lay aside their enmity against God. Faithful ministers are Christ's ambassadors. They come in God's name, and act in Christ's stead, doing what he did when he was upon earth, and what he wills to be done, now he is in heaven. Wondrous condescension! Though God can be no loser by the quarrel, nor gainer by the peace, yet by his ministers he beseeches sinners to lay aside their enmity, and accept the terms he offers; that they would be reconciled to him, to all his attributes, to all his laws, and to all his providences; to believe in the Mediator, to accept the atonement, and comply with his gospel. The apostle subjoins what should be well considered by all, ver. 21, namely, the purity of the Mediator; that he knew no sin. The sacrifice he offered; He was made Sin; not a sinner, but Sin, a Sin-offering, a Sacrifice for sin. The end and design of all this was, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him, might be justified freely by the grace of God through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. So that this holy and Divine Saviour, being perfectly willing to suffer as a sacrifice, although he was perfectly holy and righteous, was dealt with, as if he had been altogether a sinner. Thus God's hatred to sin, and his determination to punish it being displayed, he might pardon

every believer, and deal with him as though he was righteous; as a far more excellent righteousness was made his, for his justification, than any creature ever could have performed. This verse contains most conclusive arguments in proof of the sufferings of Christ, as the real and satisfactory atonement to Divine justice for our sins; and of the imputation of his perfect righteousness to believers, as their title to eternal life; and of his Godhead, whose righteousness becomes theirs for justification, by their union with him.

As Christ, who knew no sin of his own, was made Sin for us, so we, who have no righteousness of our own, are made the righteousness of God in him. Our reconciliation to God is only through Jesus Christ, and for his sake. On him therefore we must rely, and make mention of his righteousness, and his only. Let sinners then hear the voice of God in Christ, and by his ministers, beseeching them to be reconciled to him. Let professors inquire whether they are really become the friends of God, his cause, and his people. Let the penitent rejoice in the assurance that his application for peace will not be rejected, and let believers consider that God will not withhold any good thing from them. And can they venture, lose, labour, or suffer too much for him, who gave his beloved Son to be the Sacrifice for their sins, that they might be made the righteousness of God in Him?

21. *A Clarke* has adduced 108 instances from the Old and New Testament, in which the word sin, is put for sin-offering

CHAPTER VI.

The apostle shows the Corinthians that he, with others of his brethren, approved themselves to be faithful ministers of Christ; by exhorting them to entertain the gospel of reconciliation with due regard, ver. 1, 2. By their unblamable life, and behaviour under sufferings for Christ, 3—10. By their affection for them, which he hoped would be answered with the like towards themselves, 11—13. And by his own, together with his brethren's earnest concern, that they might have no fellowship with unbelievers and idolaters, 14—18.

Ver. 1—10. We have here the apostle's exhortation to all, in every place where he came. Observe, The gospel is

a word of grace sounding in our ears; but it will be in vain for us to hear it, unless we believe it, and comply with the design of it. The unspeakable love of God to sinners in the redemption by his Son, and in the appointment of the ministry of reconciliation; and the special grace or free favour shown to those whom he thus beseeches to be reconciled, would be altogether in vain as to those who neglected so great salvation through unbelief and love of sin. The apostle earnestly besought them to embrace the offers of mercy and grace. He declares the present is the only proper season to accept of offered grace. ver. 2. The gospel-day is a day of salvation, the means of grace the means of salvation, the offers of the gospel the offers of salvation, and the present time the proper time to accept these offers. To-day, while it is called to-day. The morrow is none of ours: we know not what will be on the morrow, nor where we shall be; and we should remember that present seasons of grace are short and uncertain, and cannot be recalled when past. It is our duty and interest to improve them while we enjoy them, and our salvation depends upon our so doing. The present day alone is ours, the future may find us in eternity, or we may be left to our hardness of heart. We now enjoy a day of grace; then let all be careful not to neglect it.

Many, both jews and gentiles, sought occasion to blame the apostle and his ministry; therefore he was very cautious that he might not offend the jews by unnecessary zeal against the law, nor the gentiles by unnecessary compliances with such as were zealous for the law. We should be cautious lest we give offence; ministers especially should be careful lest they bring blame on their ministry. The apostle on all occasions lays much stress on fidelity in our work. ver. 4. Ministers of the gospel should look upon themselves as God's servants or ministers, and act in every thing suitably to that character. The apostle did so.

1. By much patience in afflictions. He was a great sufferer, and met with many afflictions, often in necessities, and wanting the conveniences, if not the necessities of life; in distresses, being straitened on every side, hardly knowing what to do; in stripes often; in imprisonments; in tumults raised

against him; in labours, in preaching the gospel, and working with his hands to supply his necessities; in watchings and in fastings, voluntary upon a religious account, or involuntary for the sake of religion: but he exercised much patience in all, ver. 4, 5. It is the lot of faithful ministers often to be reduced to great difficulties, and to stand in need of much patience. Those who would approve themselves to God, must approve themselves faithful in trouble as well as in peace, not only in doing the work of God diligently, but also in bearing the will of God patiently.

2. By acting from good principles. His principles were, ver. 6, 7, pureness; and there is no piety without purity. Care to keep ourselves unspotted from the world is necessary. Knowledge was another principle; and zeal without this is but madness. He also acted with long-suffering and kindness; not being easily provoked, but bearing with the hardness of men's hearts, and hard treatment from the hands of those to whom he endeavoured to do good. He acted under the influence of the Holy Ghost, from the noble principle of unfeigned love, according to the rule of the word of truth, under the supports and assistances of the power of God, having on the armour of righteousness, or universal regard to the righteous commandments of God, from the purest gospel principles. This is the best defence against the temptations of prosperity on the right hand, and of adversity on the left.

3. By due temper and behaviour under all the variety of conditions in this world, ver. 8—10. The apostles met with honour and dishonour, good report and bad report. Believers, in this world, need the grace of God, to arm them against temptations of honour on the one hand, so as to bear good report without pride; and of dishonour on the other, so as to bear reproaches without impatience or recrimination. By some the apostles were counted deceivers: by others as true, preaching the gospel of truth, and true to the trust reposed in them. They were slighted by the men of the world as unknown, of no figure or account, not worth notice; yet in all the churches of Christ they were well known, and of great account. They were looked upon as dying, being in

danger of death all the day long, and yet behold, says the apostle, we live, and bear up cheerfully under all our hardships, and go on conquering and to conquer. They were chastened, yet not killed; and though it was thought they were sorrowful and melancholy, yet they were always rejoicing in God, and had reason to rejoice always. They were despised on account of their poverty; yet they made many rich, by preaching the unsearchable riches of Christ. They were thought to have nothing, silver and gold they had none, houses and lands they had none; yet they possessed all things. They had nothing in this world, but they had treasure in heaven; and though poor and needy in this world, they were instruments of God in making many rich unto eternal life. Their effects lay in another country, in another world. They had nothing in themselves, but possessed all things in Christ. Of such differences is a christian's life made up, and through such a variety of conditions and reports lies our way to heaven; and we should be careful in all things to approve ourselves to God.

The gospel, when faithfully preached, and fully received, better the condition of the poor. They save what before they riotously spent, they diligently employ time to useful purposes. They therefore both save and gain by religion, and thus are made rich, at least in comparison with their sinful, profligate state, before they received the gospel.—(11.)

The whole of the apostles' temper and conduct, in the varied circumstances through which they passed, tended to show their doctrine had a blessed effect upon their own souls, rendering them holy and kind, useful and happy. The animation and energy, of this beautiful passage shows the apostle's heart was full of holy affections, and communicative in speaking on such topics.

4. *Whitby* thinks, The first word signifies affliction in general, the second, more grievous troubles, the third, such pressures as reduce to the greatest straits.

Ver. 11—18. The apostle cautions the Corinthians against uniting with unbelievers. This is introduced with a pathetic profession of most tender affection to them, like that of a father to his children, ver. 11—13. O ye Corinthians, to whom I am now writing, I would fain convince you how well I love you. We are

desirous to promote the spiritual and eternal welfare of all whom we preach unto, and yours, in a special manner. Because his heart was thus enlarged to them, he opened his mouth freely in kind admonitions and exhortations: We would gladly do you all the service we can, and promote your comfort, as helpers of your faith and your joy. If it be otherwise, the fault is in yourselves; it is because ye are straitened in yourselves, through some misapprehensions concerning us; all we desire, as a recompense, is that ye would be affected to us, as children to their father. Mutual good affection between ministers and their people, greatly tends to their advantage. He cautions them not to mingle with unbelievers, not to be unequally yoked with them, ver. 14.

1. In stated relations. It is wrong for believers to join in affinity with the wicked and profane. Those relations which are our choice, must be chosen by rule; and the children of God, are to join those who are so; for there is more danger that the bad will injure the good, than hope that the good will benefit the bad. It will be near the hearts of true pastors to caution their beloved children in the gospel, not to be unequally yoked, especially by marriage, with unbelievers: the fatal effects of neglecting scripture precepts in this matter clearly appear. Those whose cross it is to be thus connected, without their wilful fault, may expect consolations under it; but when believers enter into such disadvantageous circumstances, contrary to the express warnings of God's word, they must expect much distress.

The word unbeliever applies to all destitute of true faith. This precept is too often disregarded by young persons professing to be true christians. Sordid views of self-interest, or the force of passion, influence some. The hope of being useful to the unbeliever, is the reason assigned by others—an expectation seldom, if ever, realized. And how many evils arise from such connexions! We naturally and insensibly imbibe the spirit, and copy the manners of those with whom we associate. The christian's plans of benevolence are paralyzed, opportunities of religious improvement are lessened, family worship can hardly be maintained. Religious sentiments are considered enthusiastic.

Endeavours to train up children in the fear of God are counteracted. Instead of a help meet, the union brings a snare! Many have apostatized from the faith from this cause; others who have maintained their integrity have pierced themselves through with many sorrows. The word of God repeatedly warns against such unequal marriages, and the severest judgments follow them.—(87.)

2. In common conversation. We should not join ourselves in friendship and acquaintance with wicked men and unbelievers. Though we cannot wholly avoid seeing and hearing, and being with such, yet we should never choose them for intimates.

3. Much less should we join in religious communion with unbelievers; we must not join idolatrous services, or abominations; we must not confound the table of the Lord and the table of devils. How absurd to think of joining righteousness and unrighteousness, or mingling light and darkness, fire and water, together! Believers are, and should be righteous; but unbelievers are unrighteous. Believers are made light in the Lord, but unbelievers are in darkness; and what comfortable communion can these have together? Christ and Belial are contrary one to the other; they have opposite interests and designs, so that it is impossible there should be any concord or agreement between them. It is absurd, therefore, to think of enlisting under both; but if the believer has part with an infidel, he does what in him lies to bring Christ and Belial together, and what part or share can a believer take in the unhallowed pursuits and pleasures of an unbeliever, who despises the blessed gospel of Christ?

It dishonours the christian profession, ver. 16; for christians are by profession, and should be in reality, the temples of the living God: dedicated to, and employed for the service of God, who has promised to reside in them, to dwell and walk in them, to stand in special relation to them, and take special care of them, that he will be their God, and they shall be his people. There can be no agreement between the temple of God and idols. There is great danger in communicating with unbelievers and idolaters; danger of being defiled, and of being infected; therefore the exhortation is, ver. 17, to come out from among them,

and keep at a due distance. To be separate, as one would avoid the society of those who have the leprosy or the plague, for fear of taking infection, and not to touch the unclean thing, lest we become defiled. We must take care not to defile ourselves by converse with those who defile themselves with sin; such is the will of God. There can be no profitable communion between such contrary characters. It is base ingratitude to God for all the favours he has bestowed upon believers, and promised to them, ver. 18. God has promised to be a Father to them, and that they shall be his sons and his daughters; and is there a greater honour or happiness than this? How ungrateful then must it be, if such as have this dignity and happiness, should degrade and debase themselves by mingling with unbelievers!

Let us admire God's condescending promises of dwelling in, and walking in those, whom he hath reconciled to himself by Jesus Christ. Let us come out from the workers of iniquity, and separate from their vain and sinful pleasures and pursuits; from all conformity to the corruptions of this present evil world. Let us not touch any gain or indulgence that is spotted with sin. Let us remember that the world, though called christian, still lies in wickedness, and is full of unclean things which we must abhor. Let us assure ourselves that the Lord will receive all who come in his appointed way, and will take them for his children. If it be an envied privilege to be the son or daughter of an earthly potentate, who can express the dignity and happiness of being sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty?

15 The word translated 'infidel' has a more extensive meaning, and is properly rendered unbeliever, in ver. 14. It properly signifies one who is destitute of true faith, and does not practically obey the gospel.—*Lothian*.

CHAPTER VII.

The apostle closes his last argument with an exhortation to universal holiness, ver. 1. Entreats the whole church to bear the like affection to him as he did to them, 2-4. Tells them how greatly he rejoiced, amidst all his tribulations, in the account Titus gave him of their ready compliance with the orders of his former letter, and of its happy effect, as it produced their sorrowing repentance, 5-11. He desired that his care

for them might be manifest, and rejoiced in the comfort which they and Titus had together, who found a kind reception, and saw such things among them as answered the good report the apostle had made of them, 12—16.

Ver. 1—4. These verses exhort,

1. To make progress in holiness, or to perfect holiness in the fear of God, ver. 1. This exhortation is to those who were dearly beloved, and was enforced by a consideration of those exceeding great and precious promises mentioned in the former chapter. The promises of God are strong inducements to sanctification, we must cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit. Sin is filthiness, and there are defilements of body and mind; and we must cleanse ourselves from both, for God is to be glorified both with body and soul. Also in the living unto righteousness and holiness. If we hope in God as our Father, we must endeavour to be holy as he is holy, and perfect as our Father in heaven. We must not be contented with sincerity, without aiming at perfection, though we come short of it while in this world. And this we must do in the fear of God, which is the root and principle of all religion. The promises of God should excite, and direct us in following after holiness. His grace by the influences of his Spirit alone can purify, but we must use the means appointed, and depending on that grace search out, cast off, and cleanse away all filthiness of the flesh and spirit. Perfect holiness should be the object of our constant prayers. This we are to follow as in the presence of God, and influenced by his fear, when he alone witnesses our conduct.

2. To show due regard to the ministers of the gospel, ver. 2. If the ministers of the gospel are thought contemptible, there is danger lest the gospel itself be contemned also, and though ministers must flatter none, yet they must be gentle towards all. The apostle was cautious not to do any thing to deserve their ill-will, ver. 2. We have corrupted no man by false doctrines or flattering speeches. We have defrauded no man; we have not sought to promote our own interests to the injury of any. Ministers may expect esteem and favour, when they can safely appeal to the people, that they are guilty of nothing which deserves displeasure. To prevent any

insinuations on account of what he had said, ver. 3, 4, he assures them again of his great affection to them, insomuch that he could spend his last breath at Corinth, and live and die with them, if his work as an apostle would permit him to do so. And he adds, it was his great affection to them, that made him use such boldness or freedom of speech toward them, and caused him to glory of them, in all places, and upon all occasions, being filled with comfort, and exceeding joyful in all his tribulations.

4. His joy abounded even to overflowing.—*Lothian.* Like many of the apostle's words it has a force and emphasis which cannot be properly and fully expressed in the English language.—*Macknight.* It occurs in the New Testament only here and in Rom. 5, 20.

Ver. 5—11. There seems to be a connexion between chap. 2, 13, where the apostle said he had no rest in his spirit when he found not Titus at Troas, and the fifth verse of this chapter. So great was his affection to the Corinthians, that he had no rest till he heard from them.

1. He was distressed, because he could not hear of the reception of Titus at Corinth, or how their affairs went forward. Beside this, they met with other troubles, with incessant persecutions. There were fightings without, or continual contentions with, and opposition from Jews and gentiles; and there were fears within, and great concern for such as had embraced the christian faith, lest they should be corrupted or seduced, and give scandal to others, or be scandalized.

2. He was comforted, ver. 6, 7. It was matter of joy to see Titus. But the good news Titus brought concerning the Corinthians, was matter of greater consolation, especially when he acquainted him with their mourning for the scandal found among them, the grief they had caused to others, and their great affection toward the apostle, who had faithfully reproved their faults, Prov. 28, 23. He ascribes all his comfort to God as the Author. It was God who comforted him by the coming of Titus, even the God of all comfort: God, who comforteth those who are cast down, ver. 6. We should look above and beyond all means and instruments, unto God, as the author of all the consolation and the good we enjoy. He was rejoiced at their repentance, and the evidences of it. The apostle was sorry that some pious persons among them laid to heart very

greatly what he said in his former epistle, or that it was needful he should grieve them, whom he would rather have made glad, ver. 8. But now he rejoiced, when he found they had sorrowed to repentance, ver. 9. Their sorrow in itself was not the cause of his rejoicing; but the nature of it, and the effect of it, that repentance unto salvation, made him rejoice, ver. 10; for now it appeared that they had received damage by him in nothing; their sorrow was but for a season; it was turned into joy, and that joy was durable. Observe here, godly sorrow worketh repentance. The offender had great sorrow, he was in danger of being swallowed up with over much sorrow; and the society was greatly sorrowful, which before had been puffed up: and this sorrow was according to the will of God, tending to the glory of God, and wrought by the Spirit of God, under the influence of his grace, with reference to his will and glory, and in dependence on his mercy.

Such sorrow renders the heart humble, contrite, submissive, dependent on mercy, disposed to renounce and mortify every sin, and to walk in newness of life. And this repentance was unto salvation, ver. 10. It is always connected with saving faith in Christ, and an interest in his atonement. Thus it assures to the soul all the blessings of the covenant, so that no man need or ever should repent of this sorrowing. It was a godly sorrow, because a sorrow for sin, as an offence against God, an instance of ingratitude, and a forfeiture of God's favour. There is great difference between this sorrow of a godly sort, and the sorrow of this world. Godly sorrow produces repentance and reformation, and will end in salvation; but sorrows of worldly men for worldly things, will bring them the sooner to the grave. Repentance will be attended with salvation. Humiliation and godly sorrow are necessary to repentance; both are from God, the giver of all grace, while the sorrow of worldly men about carnal objects, being separated from the fear and love of God, and from faith in his mercy, often drinks up men's spirits, breaks their proud hearts, and prompts to desperate wickedness.

The happy fruits and consequences of true repentance are mentioned, ver. 11. Where the heart is changed, the life and

actions will be changed. Their sorrow was godly sorrow, because it wrought in them great carefulness about their souls, to avoid sin, and please God. It wrought also a clearing of themselves, not by insisting on their own justification before God, especially while they persisted in their sin, but by endeavours to put away the accursed thing, and so to free themselves from any just imputation of approving the evil that had been done. It wrought indignation at sin, at themselves, at the tempter and his instruments. It wrought fear, a fear of reverence, a fear of watchfulness, and a fear of distrust; not distrust of God, but of themselves; an awful fear of God, a cautious fear of sin, and a jealous fear of themselves. It wrought vehement desire after thorough reformation of what had been amiss, and of reconciliation with God whom they had offended. It wrought zeal, a mixture of love and anger, a zeal for duty, and against sin. It wrought, lastly, revenge against sin and their own folly, by endeavours to make all due satisfaction for injuries done thereby. Thus in all things had they approved themselves to be clear in that matter. Not that they were innocent, but that they were penitent before God, who would pardon and not punish them. Deep humiliation before God, hatred of all sin, with faith in Christ, a new heart and a new life, constitute repentance unto salvation not to be repented of. May the Lord bestow it on every one of us. Sorrowing after this godly manner will work great carefulness and watchfulness in us, to amend our lives, and to subdue every iniquity. We shall desire to clear our own consciences, and to show the reality of our repentance; we shall be indignant at ourselves for past transgressions; we shall fear relapsing into sin, and vehemently desire forgiveness and sanctifying grace.

8. We are not to suppose that the apostle expresses repentance for what was done under the guidance of the Holy Spirit; we are only to understand that misgiving which a good man feels from tenderness for the feelings of others. As *Scott* observes, a physician may give a powerful medicine to a patient, persuaded that his case requires it; yet his anxiety about the event may induce him sometimes to wish that he had not given it.—*Bloomfield, Falpy.*

11. The marks of repentance here enumerated, are to be considered rather with reference to the peculiar circumstances of the case referred to, and the various parts which different individuals acted, than as distinct evidences

of evangelical sorrow. Still however they may be accommodated to illustrate this.—*Lothian*.

Ver. 12-16. The apostle tells the Corinthians he had a good design in his former epistle. It was not chiefly for his cause that did the wrong, not only for his benefit, much less merely that he should be punished; nor yet was it only for his cause that suffered wrong, namely, the injured father, but it was also to manifest his sincere concern for the whole church, lest that should suffer, by letting such a crime remain without due remark and resentment. He acquaints them with the joy of Titus and himself, on account of their repentance. Titus was rejoiced, and his spirit refreshed with their comfort, and this comforted and rejoiced the apostle also, ver. 13. And when Titus remembered his reception, their obedience to the apostolical directions, and their awe at his reproofs, the thoughts of these things increased his affection to them, ver. 15. Great comfort and joy follow godly sorrow. As sin occasions general grief, so repentance and reformation occasion general joy. Paul was glad, Titus was glad, the Corinthians were comforted, and the penitent ought to be comforted. Well may joy be on earth, when there is joy in heaven, over one sinner that repenteth.

The apostle expresses entire confidence in them. He was not disappointed concerning them, which he signified to Titus; and he could now with joy declare what confidence he had in them for the time to come. It is great comfort and joy to a faithful minister, to have to do with a people in whom he can confide, and who are willing to comply with whatever he proposes that is for the glory of God, and the credit of the gospel. There is much address manifested in this part of the epistle. Paul's kind acceptance of what had been done, and the confidence he expressed concerning them, were well calculated to excite to a more entire reformation.

We here see the mutual duties of a pastor and of his flock; the latter is to alleviate the troubles which attend the pastoral office, by respect and obedience, and due reverence; the former is to make a suitable return on all occasions by his care, and continually to cherish the flock by fresh testimonies of satisfaction, joy, and tenderness.

CHAPTER VIII.

The apostle having vindicated his character, and expressed his satisfaction in the regard that the Corinthian church had shown to him, reminds them of his exhortation to charitable contributions for the poor saints at Jerusalem. This he enforces by the laudable example of the macedonian churches, ver. 1-6. By the eminence of their gifts, and by the love and grace of Christ to them, 7-9. By the willingness they themselves had shown to this good work a year ago, and the advantage that would accrue to them by it, 10-15. And then he recommends Titus and two other brethren, who, at his request, came to them upon this very business, 16-24.

Ver. 1-6. The apostle, from the good example of the churches of Macedonia, exhorts the Corinthians and the christians in Achaia to the good work of charity. The charitable gifts of these churches are called the grace or gifts of God, because their charity to the poor saints proceeded from God as the Author, and was accompanied with true love to God, manifested this way. The grace of God must be owned as the root and fountain of all the good in us, or done by us, at any time; and it is great grace and favour from God, and bestowed on us, if we are made useful to others, and forward to any good work. He commends the charity of the macedonians. They were themselves in distress, yet they contributed to the relief of others. It was a time of great affliction with them, Acts 16, 17. The christians in these parts suffered ill-treatment, which had reduced them to deep poverty; yet, as they had abundance of joy in the midst of tribulation, they abounded in their liberality; they gave out of a little, trusting in God to provide for them. They gave as liberally as if they had been rich. They made a large contribution; it was according to, yea beyond their power; more than could well be expected from them. They were very ready and forward to this good work. So far from needing that Paul should urge them, they prayed him to receive the gift, ver. 4. It seems Paul was unwilling to undertake this trust, his enemies might accuse him of indiscretion and partiality in the distribution. How cautious all christians, and particularly ministers, should be, especially in money matters

not to give occasion to those who seek occasion to speak reproachfully!

Their charity was founded in true piety: first, they gave themselves to the Lord, and then they gave their contributions by the will of God, ver. 5, that is, according as it was the will of God they should do; or to be disposed of as the will of God should be, and for his glory. This exceeded the expectation of the apostle. They solemnly and unanimously made a fresh surrender of themselves, and all they had, unto the Lord Jesus Christ; sanctifying their contributions to do God honour, by first giving themselves to the Lord. When we give ourselves to the Lord, we give him all we have, to be called for and disposed of according to his will. Whatever we use or lay out for God, it is only giving him what is his own. All we give or bestow for charitable uses, will not be accepted of God, or turn to our advantage, unless we first give ourselves to the Lord. The apostle tells them that Titus was desired to collect among them, ver. 6; and Titus, he knew, would be acceptable to them. He was, on all accounts, a proper person to be employed; and when so good a work had already prospered in so good a hand, it would be a pity if it should not proceed. It is wise to use proper instruments in work, so that we desire to proceed well.

By ascribing all real good works to the grace of God, we not only give the glory to him whose due it is; but also show men where their strength is, and enable humble believers to read the Lord's special love to them, in the fruits of their love to him, and to his people. Abundant spiritual joy enlarges men's hearts in the work and labour of love, and they do more than could have been otherwise performed. How different this from the conduct of those who will not concur in any good work unless urged into it! The happy frame of mind, already described, must spring from unreserved surrender of ourselves to the Lord, that we may live to his glory, as well as partake of his salvation.

Ver. 7-9. The apostle stirs up the Corinthians to this good work of charity. He urges upon them their eminence in other gifts and graces, and would have them excel in this of charity also, ver. 7. He commends them for other good things

that were found in them. People love to be accosted kindly, and it is justice due to those in whom God's grace shines, to give them due commendation. Observe, what the Corinthians abounded in, Faith is mentioned first, that is the root; and as without faith it is impossible to please God, Heb. 11. 6, so those who abound in faith, will abound in other graces and good works also; and this will work and show itself by love. Many have faith, who want utterance. But these Corinthians excelled in spiritual gifts, particularly in utterance; and with this there appeared knowledge. They abounded also in all diligence. Great talkers are not always the best doers; but these Corinthians were diligent to do, as well as to know and talk well. They had abundant love to their ministers! and were not like too many, who, having gifts of their own, slight their ministers. To all these good things the apostle desires them to add this grace also—to abound in charity to the poor. The apostle takes care to prevent any misapprehension, ver. 8; and tells them, he took occasion from the forwardness of others, to propose what would be expedient for them, and would prove the sincerity of their love, or be the genuine effect and evidence thereof. A difference should be made between plain and positive duty, and the improvement of present opportunity of doing or getting good. Many things which are good for us to do, yet cannot be said to be, by express and indispensable commandment, our duty at this or that time.

The best arguments for christian duties are those drawn from the grace and love of Christ. The example of the churches of Macedonia was such as the Corinthians should imitate; but the example of our Lord Jesus Christ should have much greater influence. And ye know, saith the apostle, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, ver. 9; that, though he was rich, as being God, equal in power and glory with the Father, rich in the glory and blessedness of the upper world, yet he not only became man for us, but became poor also. At length he entirely impoverished himself, as it were, to ransom their souls by his sacrifice on the cross. Christ was born in poor circumstances, lived a poor life, died in poverty; and this was for our sakes, that we thereby might be made rich; rich in the Divine love and favour;

rich in the blessings and promises of the new covenant; rich in the hopes of eternal life, being heirs of the kingdom. We should be charitable to the poor out of what we have, because we ourselves live upon the charity of the Lord Jesus Christ. And the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ was not declared in kind words only.

From what riches, blessed Lord, to what poverty didst thou descend for our sakes! and to what riches hast thou advanced us through thy poverty! After this can we refuse thee any thing? Can we grudge to give thee what is thine own? No, Lord. Do with us and with what thou givest us, whatever thou pleasest. It is our happiness to be wholly at thy disposal.—(33.)

9. The word here used invariably denotes to become poor from a previous condition of competency and opulence.—*J. P. Smith*. He points out that in this passage there is a definite recognition of a pre-existent and glorious state of the Messiah. *Mayer* shows that in all passages of the septuagint, or of classical writers, it implies a change of state, or transition from opulence to poverty, from possession to privation.

Ver. 10—15. It was expedient for them to perform what they purposed, and finish what they had begun. Good purposes are like buds and blossoms, pleasant to behold, and give hopes of good fruit; but they are lost, and signify nothing, without performances. Good beginnings are amiable; but we lose the benefit, unless there is perseverance. Seeing therefore that the Corinthians had showed readiness to will, the apostle would have them careful in the performance, according to their ability. This would be acceptable to God. The willing mind is accepted, ver. 12. When men purpose that which is good, and endeavour, according to their ability, to perform also, God will accept what they have, or can do, and not reject them for what they have not, and what is not in their power to do. This is true as to other things, beside the work of charity. But this scripture will not justify those who think good meanings are enough, or that good purposes, and the mere profession of a willing mind, are sufficient to save. It is indeed a universal rule, that the sinner's willingness to repent, to believe in Christ, to love and obey him, and to do good to others for his sake, springs from Divine grace. Without this principle all

outward services must be ostentatious or hypocritical. But where this is first produced, the defective attempts of the believer to glorify God will be accepted, and graciously rewarded, although themselves worse than undeserving.

Providence gives to some more of the good things of this world, and to some less, that those who have abundance, might supply others who are in want, ver. 14. But the apostle did not mean to relieve the poor in Judea by burdening the Corinthians; or to exact from them and to exempt other churches. He only desired that there should be some equality preserved among them as brethren in Christ; that on this occasion the Corinthians should communicate, and hereafter be relieved if they should be in want.

We should consider the mutability of human affairs, and how soon there may be an alteration, so that those who now have abundance may need being supplied themselves in their wants; and this should induce us to be charitable while we are able. It is the will of God, that by our mutual supplying one another, there should be some sort of equality; not such a levelling as would destroy property, for in such a case there could be no exercise of charity. But in works of charity there should be an equitable proportion observed, that the burden may not lie too heavy on some, while others are wholly eased; and all should think themselves concerned to supply those in want.* This is illustrated by the gathering and distributing the manna in the wilderness. It was the duty of every family, and all in the family, to gather what they could; which, when gathered, was put into some common receptacle, whence there was distribution to every one as they had occasion. Such is the condition of men in this world, that we mutually depend on one another, and should help one another. Those who have most of this world, have no more than food and raiment; and those who have but little of this world, seldom are absolutely destitute of these: nor, indeed, should those who have abundance suffer others thus to want, but be ready to afford them a supply.

14. *Shuttleworth* remarks on the cautious solicitude displayed by St. Paul, to place his motives on the delicate subject of a pecuniary contribution, beyond the possibility of suspicion, and that the collection began about 1

year before, had not been promoted by the Corinthians with the alacrity he had a right to expect.

Ver. 16—24. The apostle commends the brethren sent to collect their charity, that it might be known who they were, and how safely they might be trusted. He commends Titus for his earnest care and desire to promote their welfare in all things. It is cause of thankfulness, if God hath put into the hearts of any to do us or others any good. Also for his readiness to this present service. Asking charity for the relief of others, is by many looked upon as a thankless office; yet it is a good office, and what we should not be shy of when called to it. He commends another brother; it is generally thought that this was Luke. His services were well known, and he had approved himself praiseworthy. He was chosen by the churches, and joined with the apostle in his ministration. He would not give occasion to any to accuse him of injustice or partiality; it is the duty of all christians to act prudently, to prevent, as far as we can, all unjust suspicions. It is indeed needful in the first place to act uprightly in the sight of God, but things honest in the sight of men should also be attended to. It is the crime of others, if they reproach or censure us without occasion; but it is our imprudence at least, if we give them any occasion, when there may not be a just cause for them so to do. A clear character, as well as a pure conscience, is requisite for usefulness. He commends also another brother who had approved himself diligent in many things, therefore was fit to be employed in this affair. Moreover, he had a great desire to this work, because of the confidence or good opinion he had of the Corinthians.

He concludes with a general commendation of these messengers of the churches, as the glory of Christ; they brought glory to Christ as instruments, and had obtained honour from Christ to be counted faithful, and employed in his service. Wherefore he further exhorts the Corinthians to show liberality, that these messengers of the churches, and the churches themselves, might see full proof of their love to God, and to their afflicted brethren; and that it was with good reason the apostle had even boasted on their behalf, ver. 24. The good opinion

others entertain of us, should be an argument with us to do well.

CHAPTER IX.

The apostle excuses his sending Titus; and the two other brethren that accompanied him, to collect their alms, notwithstanding the confidence he had in their own readiness to that good work, ver. 1—5. He further encourages the Corinthians by several arguments to be liberal and cheerful in it, 6—14. With a thanksgiving to God for his unspeakable gift, 15.

Ver. 1—5. The apostle, while he excuses his earnest exhortations to charity, still presses them thereto. It was needless to urge with further arguments to afford relief to their poor brethren, being satisfied he had said enough already to prevail with them, of whom he had so good an opinion. For he knew they had begun this good work a year ago, so that he had boasted of their zeal to the macedonians, and this had provoked many to do as they had done; and so, commending them for what they had done, he lays an obligation on them to proceed and persevere. He is unwilling they should be offended at his sending Titus and the other brethren, as if he pressed too hard upon them; and tells why he sent them. That, having this timely notice, they might not be surprised when they should come. When we would have others do good, we must act toward them prudently and tenderly, and give them time. And he intimates that some from Macedonia might come with him; and if the collection should not then be made, this would make him, not to say them, ashamed. Thus careful was he to preserve their reputation and his own. Christians should consult the reputation of their profession, and endeavour to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.

He would have it appear a bounty, or benefaction willingly bestowed, not money extorted from them by importunity, as contributions reluctantly bestowed. The word bounty signifies a blessing, which may either intimate that it should be given from gratitude, and as an act of praise and thanksgiving; or that it should spring from love, and a disposition to do good to the brethren.

The duty of ministering to the saints is so obvious, that it might seem unne-

cessary to exhort christians to it, yet they are so apt to forget their principles and obligations, and self-love contends so powerfully against the constraining love of Christ, that it is often necessary to stir up their minds by way of remembrance.

Ver. 6—15. As to the manner in which the apostle would have the Corinthians give, observe,

1. It should be bountifully; not what savoured of covetousness; men who expect a good return at harvest, are not wont to spare in sowing their seed. The seed corn seems to be thrown away, yet this alone yields any increase. Money bestowed in charity may to the carnal mind seem thrown away, but when given from proper principles it is seed sown, and substance from which a valuable increase may be expected.

2. It should be deliberately; Every according as he purposes in his heart. ver. 7. Works of charity, like other good works, should be done with thought and design. Some do good only by accident: they comply, it may be hastily, with the importunity of others, without any good design, and give more than they intended, and then repent of it afterward; or possibly, had they duly considered all things, they would have given more. Due deliberation, as to our circumstances, and those we are about to relieve, will direct our contributions for charitable uses.

3. It should be freely, whatever we give, be it more or less; not grudgingly, or of necessity, but cheerfully. ver. 7. Persons sometimes will give merely to satisfy importunity. We ought to give more freely than the modesty of some necessitous persons will allow them to ask, being glad we have ability and opportunity to be charitable. While some scatter and yet increase; there are others who withhold more than is meet, and it tendeth to poverty.

Here is encouragement to this work of charity in the manner directed.

1. They themselves would be no losers by what they gave in charity. If we had more faith and love, we should waste less on ourselves, and sow more in hope of a plentiful increase. They may expect good returns, who give freely and liberally in charity. For God loveth a cheerful giver, ver. 7; and what may

not they hope to receive, who are the objects of the Divine love? Can a man be a loser by doing that with which God is pleased? May not such a one be sure that he shall some way or other be a gainer? Are not the love and favour of God better than all other things, better than life itself? God is able to make our charity redound to our advantage, ver. 8. We have no reason to distrust the goodness of God, and surely we have no reason to question his power. He is able to make all grace abound towards us, and to abound in us; to give a large increase of spiritual and temporal good things. He can make us to have sufficiency in all things; to be content with what we have. He is able to make up what we give: to make us able to give yet more. Ps. 112. 9. And acts of kindness to the poor, from love to Christ, would be accepted works of righteousness, the benefit of which would remain for ever.

The apostle prays to God that they might be gainers, and not losers. ver. 10, 11. The prayer is made to God, who ministereth seed to the sower, who by his providence gives such increase of the fruits of the earth, that we have not only bread sufficient to eat for one year, but enough to sow again for a future supply. And thus it is God who gives, not only a competency for ourselves, but that also wherewith we may supply the wants of others, and this should be as seed to be sown. He desires several things for them; that they may have bread for their food; always a good competency for themselves, food convenient. That God would multiply their seed sown, that they might still be able to do more good; and that there might be an increase of the fruits of righteousness, that they might reap plentifully, and have ample returns of their charity; so as to be enriched in every thing to all bountifulness, ver. 11, that they may find they shall be no losers, but great gainers. Works of charity are so far from impoverishing, that they are the proper means truly to enrich us, or make us truly rich. God can easily give us enough to use, and enough to disperse; that we may have more, sow more, and reap more; be happy in ourselves, blessings to others, and instruments of promoting his glory.

2. The poor distressed saints would be

gainers; for this service would supply their wants, ver. 12. If we have reason to think those are saints, whose wants are great; how ready should we be to do them good! Our goodness cannot extend unto God, but we should freely extend it to these excellent ones of the earth, and thus show that we delight in them.

3. This would redound to the praise and glory of God. Many thanksgivings would be given to God on this account, ver. 11. These would bless God, who made them happy instruments in so good a work. The poor, who were supplied in their wants, would be thankful to God, and bless God for them; and all who wished well to the gospel would glorify God for this experiment, or proof of subjection to the gospel of Christ, and true love to all men, ver. 13. True christianity is a subjection to the gospel; it is a yielding ourselves to the commanding influence of its truths and laws. We must evidence the sincerity of our subjection to the gospel, by works of charity. This will be for the credit of our profession, and to the praise and glory of God. And those whose wants are supplied, should make the best returns they are able, by sending up many prayers to God for those who relieve them, when not able to recompense them any other way; and as this is the only recompense the poor can make, so it is often greatly for the advantage of the rich.

Admiration of the exceeding grace of God, whereby so happy a change had been wrought in their character and conduct, caused the apostle to break out in thanks to God for the unspeakable grace of the gospel, and the gift of his Son to be the Saviour of sinners; by whom idolatrous gentiles had been brought to glorify him. The fruits of redemption and grace were not excluded from the apostle's mind, but doubtless Christ himself was principally intended by the unspeakable gift of God.

While therefore we thank the Lord for the unspeakable gift of his Son, to be our gracious Redeemer; through whom even vile sinners, like ourselves, may perform such honourable and useful services, with confidence that they will be accepted and recompensed; let us endeavour to copy the example of Christ, being unwearied in doing good, and deeming it more blessed to give than to receive.

Blessed be God for the unspeakable gift of his grace, whereby he enables and inclines some of his people to communicate, and others to be grateful in their acknowledgments of it; and blessed be his glorious name to all eternity, for Jesus Christ, that superlative, inestimable gift of his love, through whom this, and every other good thing, pertaining to life and godliness, is freely bestowed upon us, beyond all expression, measure, or bounds.—(82.)

CHAPTER X.

The apostle returning to a necessary vindication of himself, and confutation of the invidious suggestions of false teachers who set themselves against him, asserts his authority with great meekness and humility, ver. 1-6. Reasons with the Corinthians about it, 7-11. Rejects the vaunting methods of those teachers; and lays down the better rule, by which he proceeded in his ministrations, seeking the glory of God, and to be approved of him, 12-18.

Ver. 1-6. The apostle Paul now speaks for himself, as against him the false apostles had particularly levelled their reproaches; yet in the midst of the greatest provocations he showed humility and mildness, from consideration of the meekness and gentleness of Christ, and he desires that this great example might have the same influence on the Corinthians. When we find ourselves tempted or inclined to be rough and severe, we should think of the meekness and gentleness of Christ, in the days of his flesh, in the design of his undertaking, and in all the acts of his grace towards poor souls. How humbly also does this great apostle speak of himself, as one in presence base among them! His enemies spake of him with contempt, representing him as mean-spirited and abject, for they disdained his lowly appearance and unassuming deportment. While others thought meanly, and spake scornfully of him, he had low thoughts, and spake humbly, of himself. We should be sensible of our own infirmities, and think humbly of ourselves, even when men reproach us for them. He is desirous that no occasion might be given to use severity. He beseeches them to give no occasion for him to exercise his authority against them in general, as he had resolved to

do against some who unjustly charged him as walking according to the flesh, that is, regulating his conduct, even in his ministerial actions, according to carnal policy, or with worldly views. This the apostle had renounced; it is contrary to the spirit and design of the gospel.

He asserts the power of his preaching, ver. 3—5. The work of the ministry is a spiritual warfare with spiritual enemies, and for spiritual purposes. Though ministers walk in the flesh, or live in the body, and in common affairs of life act as others, yet in their work and warfare they must not go by the maxims of the flesh, nor should they design to please the flesh; that must be crucified with its affections and lusts; it must be mortified and kept under. The doctrines of the gospel and discipline of the church are the weapons of this warfare; and these are not carnal. Outward force is not the method of the gospel, but strong persuasions, by the power of truth and the meekness of wisdom. This is a good argument against persecution for conscience' sake. Conscience is accountable to God only; and people must be persuaded to God and their duty, not driven by force. And so the weapons of our warfare are mighty, or very powerful; the evidence of truth is convincing and cogent. This indeed is through God, or owing to him, because they are his institutions, and accompanied with his blessing, which makes all opposition fall before his victorious gospel. What opposition is made against the gospel, by the powers of sin and Satan in the hearts of men! Ignorance, prejudices, and beloved lusts, are Satan's strong-holds in the souls of some; vain imagination, carnal reasonings, and high thoughts, or proud conceits, in others, exalt them against the knowledge of God. By these ways the devil endeavours to keep men from faith and obedience to the gospel, and secures his possession of the hearts of men, as his own house or property. But then observe the conquest which the word of God gains. The conversion of the soul is the conquest of Satan in that soul.

The preaching of the gospel, confirmed by miracles, and accompanied by the power of the Holy Spirit, pulled down their strong-holds, dispersed Satan's garrisons, delivered his captives,

and subverted his authority, by diffusing the knowledge of God, of his commandments, and his salvation among mankind. When all that self-sufficiency, unbelief, and impenitence were cast down, which hardened men's hearts, and enslaved them to vice; when a man was brought to the light of the knowledge of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ, and to the exercise of repentance, and faith; then every thought, imagination, affection, and purpose of his heart being conquered by his Saviour's grace, and held captive by his love, he became obedient to his teaching and command, and thence forth the willing subject of Christ in all his ordinances and commands. As no outward miracle could effect this change, without new-creating grace; so we are sure that the power of God in the latter was principally intended by the apostle. The appointed means, however feeble they appear to some, will be mighty through God. And the preaching of the cross, by men of faith and prayer, has always been fatal to the strong-holds of idolatry, impiety, and wickedness.

2. The apostle's power to punish offenders is asserted in ver. 6. He speaks not of personal revenge, but of punishing disobedience to the gospel, and disorderly walking, by inflicting church censures. Though the apostle showed meekness and gentleness, yet he would not betray his authority; therefore he intimates, that when he would commend those whose obedience was fulfilled or manifested, others would fall under severe censures. While God makes his people willing in the day of his power, and gradually perfects them in obedience and the beauties of holiness, he is in readiness to avenge the disobedience of the impenitent and unbelieving, especially that of hypocrites and false teachers, who corrupt the church and dishonour his name.

Ver. 7—11. In these verses the apostle reasons with those who despised him, and spoke hardly of him. Do ye, says he, look on things after the outward appearance, ver. 7. Is this a fit measure or rule to estimate things or persons by? In outward appearance, Paul was mean and despicable with some, but this was a false rule to form an opinion by. It should seem, that

some boasted of themselves, and made a fair show; but there are often false appearances. A man may seem to be learned, who has not learned Christ; and appear virtuous, who has not the principle of grace in his heart. However, the apostle asserts two things of himself. If any man trust to himself that he is Christ's, even so are we Christ's, ver. 7. Suppose we should allow that those who differ from us very much, may yet belong to Christ, as well as we, yet they ought also to allow to us, that we also are Christ's. We must not, by the most charitable allowances we make to others who differ from us, cut ourselves off from Christ, or deny our relation to him; and how confident soever we may be that we belong to Christ, yet we must allow that they who differ from us, may belong to Christ also. We must not think that none belong to Christ but ourselves. We may plead for ourselves, against those who judge us and despise us, that, how weak soever we are, yet, as they are Christ's, so are we. We profess the same faith, we walk by the same rule, build upon the same foundation, and hope for the same inheritance.

His authority from Christ as an apostle he had mentioned before: and now he tells them that he might speak of it again, seeing it was a truth that the Lord had given it to him. Edification, and not destruction, is the end of all authority, and especially of the extraordinary authority the apostles had. He declares his design was not to terrify them with words, nor by angry letters. Thus he seems to obviate objections that might have been formed against him. It is recorded that Paul was of low stature, and his delivery ungraceful, while his rejecting the studied ornaments of grecian eloquence, and his plain address, would render his speech contemptible with many persons. But he warned such as spoke thus of him, that when he arrived at Corinth, he would act as decidedly as he now wrote. He did not intend to frighten those who were obedient, nor did he write any thing in his letters that he was not able to make good against the disobedient; and he would have his adversaries know this, ver. 11. Some men seem out of their element when not menacing Divine judgments on all who oppose them, as if they would terrify every one to silence

and submission, but Paul was not of that number.

Let us not look on things after the outward appearance, as if the want of such things proved a man not to be an eminent christian, or an able faithful minister of the lowly Saviour. Even the apostle Paul was base in the judgment of some self-concoited Corinthians. This should suffice to teach us not to judge all to be gold that glitters, but to try it by the balance of the sanctuary.

10. *Nicephorus* and other ancient writers, say that St. Paul was of low stature, crooked and bald; some add that he had an impediment in his speech, and that his voice was shrill and unpleasant, and his delivery ungraceful. This description, however, may be considered as exaggerated, and from the addresses of St. Paul before the Areopagus, and before Felix and Agrippa, it is evident that he possessed considerable powers of oratory. See ch. 11. 6.

Ver. 12—18. The apostle will not act by such rules as the false apostles. They took a wrong method in comparing themselves among themselves. They prided themselves in their own attainments, and never considered those who exceeded them in gifts and graces, in power and authority. If we would compare ourselves with others who excel us, this would be a good method to keep us humble; we should be pleased and thankful for gifts or graces, but never pride ourselves, as if there were none to be compared with us, or that excel us. The apostle would not be of the number of such vain men. Let us resolve that we will not make ourselves of that number, but be diligent, and study to be quiet, and to mind our own business, though in an obscure situation. He fixes a better rule for his conduct; namely, not to boast of things without his measure, which was the measure God had distributed to him. He would not boast of more than God had really bestowed on him; or rather, he would keep within his own province, and that compass of ground which God had marked out for him.

There is not a more fruitful source of error than to judge of persons and opinions by our own prejudices. How common is it for persons to judge of their religious character by the opinions and maxims of the world around them! But how different is the rule of God's word! They compare themselves with those of similar character, and do not apply the

true standard. Hence they remain strangers to their true situation as sinners exposed to God's wrath. They reject the free offers of the gospel; they despise the great atonement, and treat the doctrine of regeneration by the Holy Spirit as absurd.—(87.)

St. Paul's commission as an apostle was to preach the gospel every where; yet he observed the directions of Providence, and the Holy Spirit, as to whether he went or where he abode. He acted according to this rule; We stretch not ourselves beyond our measure, ver. 14, particularly at Corinth; he came thither by Divine direction, and there converted many to christianity. In boasting of them as his charge, he boasted not of other's men labours, ver. 15. His hope was, that their faith was increased, and that others, even in the remoter parts of Achaia, would embrace the gospel also; and in all this he exceeded not his commission, nor acted in another man's line. The unjust accusations and reflections of his enemies, made it needful he should justify himself; and the wrong methods they took, gave him good occasion to mention the better rule he had observed. Yet he is afraid of boasting, or taking any praise to himself, and therefore he mentions two things which ought to be regarded. He that glorieth, should glory in the Lord, ver. 17. If we are able to fix good rules for our conduct, or act by them, or have any good success in so doing, the praise and glory of all are owing unto God. Every man who gloried should glory in the Lord Jesus, as his whole salvation, and as the giver of all his endowments and usefulness. If a man could not thus glory in the Lord, all the rest must be vain-glory, and issue in shame and misery.

Of all flattery, self-flattery is the worst; at the best, self-commendation is proud: it is often as foolish and vain as it is proud. Therefore, instead of praising or commending ourselves, we should strive to approve ourselves to God, and his approbation will be our best commendation, ver. 18. That man was not to be considered as approved, in respect of his profession or ministry, who could speak eloquently or plausibly in his own commendation, but he to whose faithfulness the Lord himself bare testimony. In a word, let us remember to glory in

the Lord our salvation, and in all other things only as evidences of his love, or means of promoting his glory. Instead of commending ourselves, or seeking the praise of men, let us desire and aspire after that honour which cometh from God only.

13. The terms used here are considered to be agonistical, or to have reference to the public games celebrated in the neighbourhood of Corinth. In this view, the measure of the rule alludes to the path marked out and bounded by a white line for each of the racers. So the apostle represents his work in preaching the gospel, as his spiritual race, and the province to which he was appointed, as the space of ground God had measured out for him. In ver. 14 the reference is to one who ran beyond, or out of his line; and to him that came foremost to the goal; in ver. 16, to one who left his own path and ran in that of another.—See *Hammond and Guyse*.

14—16. *Paley* says, this passage affords an undoubted proof of the truth and exactness of the historical narrative in the Acts. The apostle speaks of Corinth as the extremity of his travels at that period, and the history plainly states that Corinth was the furthest limit of his journey into Europe, from whence, after a considerable stay, he returned into Asia.

CHAPTER XI.

The apostle, in vindicating his authority against his enemies, gives the reasons for speaking in his own commendation, ver. 1—4. Shows that he had not come short of any of the apostles of Christ, much less of the false apostles, whom he describes, in freely preaching the gospel, 5—15. Makes another apology for what he was going to add in defence of his own character, 16—21. He draws out an account at large of his external privileges, as equal to those of the false apostles; and of his qualifications, labours, cares, sufferings, danger, and deliverances, as more than theirs, 22—33.

Ver. 1—4. The apostle allowed that in general self-commendation implied folly, yet the case required it of him at this time. In his case it was necessary; yet, as others might apprehend it folly in him, he desires them to bear with it. As much as it is against a proud man to acknowledge his infirmities, so much is it against a humble man to speak in his own praise. It is no pleasure to a good man to speak well of himself, yet in some cases it is lawful, when it is for the advantage of others, or for his own vindication; as here. He desired,

1. To preserve the Corinthians from being corrupted by the insinuations of the false apostles. He was much afraid lest their faith should be weakened by

hearkening to suggestions tending to lessen their regard to his ministry, by which they were brought to the christian faith. The conversion of a soul is its marriage to the Lord Jesus ; and he was desirous to present them pure and spotless, and faithful, not having their minds corrupted with false doctrines, by false teachers, as Eve was beguiled by the subtilty of the serpent to seek happiness in departure from God, and disobedience to him. This godly jealousy in the apostle was a mixture of love and fear ; and faithful ministers cannot but be concerned for their people, lest they lose what they have received, and turn from what they have embraced, especially when deceivers have crept in among them.

2. To vindicate himself against the false apostles ; as they could not pretend they had another Jesus, or another Spirit, or another gospel, to preach to them, ver. 4. Seeing there is but one Jesus, one Spirit, and one gospel to be preached to them, and received by them, why should the Corinthians be prejudiced against him, who first instructed them in the faith, by the artifices of any adversary ? It was a just occasion of jealousy, that such persons designed to preach another Jesus, another Spirit, and another gospel. When professors are about to leave those pastors by whose means they have been converted to Christ, let them ask themselves whether their new favourites can preach another Jesus, another Sanctifier, or another gospel, than they have already received. They should not endure such men as, without sufficient cause, would alienate them from the instruments of God in their conversion. They need not wonder if some misrepresent their pastors, as exceptionable or erroneous, when deceivers said such things of Paul himself.

Ver. 5—15. The apostleship, as an office, was equal in all the apostles ; but the apostles, like other christians, differed one from another. Paul was indeed of the first magnitude ; yet he speaks modestly of himself, and humbly owns his personal infirmities. However, he was not rude in knowledge ; much less was he ignorant of the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, as had been thoroughly manifested among

them. It is far better to be rude in speech, yet walking openly and consistently with the gospel, than to be admired by thousands for excellency of speech, and be lifted up in pride, to pester the church with heresies and contentious, and disgrace the gospel by evil tempers and an unholy life. They had fully proved him in every particular ; and they were so well acquainted with his principles and conduct, that they must be sensible their new teachers could not make any improvement.

The apostle insists on his equality with the false apostles in preaching the gospel to the Corinthians freely ; and shows that as they could not but own him to be a minister of Christ, so they ought to acknowledge that he had been a good friend to them. He had proved the lawfulness of ministers receiving maintenance from the people, and the duty of the people to give them sufficient maintenance. Here he says, he had taken wages of other churches, ver. 8 : he had a right to have asked and received from the Corinthians ; yet he chose rather to work in the trade of tent-making to maintain himself, than be burdensome to them ; that they might be exalted, or encouraged to receive the gospel, which they had so cheap ; yea, he chose rather to be supplied from Macedonia than to be chargeable to them. This his conduct among them was not because he did not love them, ver. 11, or was unwilling to receive tokens of their love ; for love and friendship are manifested by mutual giving and receiving. But it was to avoid offence. He would not give occasion for any to accuse him of worldly designs in preaching the gospel, that others who opposed him at Corinth, might not in this respect gain an advantage against him, but that wherein they gloried, as to this matter, they might be found even as he.

The false apostles are charged as deceitful workers ; because though they were the ministers of Satan, they would seem to be ministers of righteousness. There were counterfeit apostles under the New Testament, who seemed in many respects like the true apostles of Christ. Hypocrisy is not much to be wondered at in this world, especially when we consider the great influence which Satan, who rules in the hearts of the children of disobedience, has upon the minds of

many. As he can turn into any shape, and put on almost any form, and look sometimes like an angel of light, in order to promote his kingdom of darkness, so he will teach his ministers and instruments to do the same. He can delude men with professions of extraordinary light, high affections, revelations, deadness to the world, and devotion, that he may disgrace the holy religion of Christ, hurry into extravagancies, lead men to neglect the plain rule of the written word, and make them enthusiasts, antinomians, or superstitious formalists. But such cannot do away the law of God as a rule of duty, and the standard of sin and holiness; they will find it in full force at the day of judgment. And there is equal danger on the other side. It serves Satan's purposes as well, to set up good works against the atonement of Christ, and salvation by faith and grace. But the end will discover them to be deceitful workers; their work will end in ruin and destruction, ver. 15. Whatever such men may profess, and however they may be admired and applauded, their end will be according to their works, their conduct in the sight of God, and the effect of their principles among men. Satan will allow his ministers to preach either the law or the gospel separately, but the law, as established by faith in Christ's righteousness and atonement, and the participation of his Spirit, is the test of every false system, and detects Satan, however transformed into an angel of light.

6. No one who has carefully read the epistle and speeches of St. Paul, can think him devoid of persuasion, or of oratorical powers. But that he purposely avoided the artificial form of Grecian oratory, therefore this being undue in speech, may be referred to the plain, martial way of speaking which he adopted—See *Locke* and others.

9. The arrival at Corinth of brethren from Macedonia, during St. Paul's first residence at Corinth, is recorded, Acts 18. 1—*Paley*.

12. *Guyse* paraphrases this verse as follows: "What I have done in preaching the gospel gratis, and will persist in, is that I may stop the mouths of those false teachers; and that in the very thing wherein they boast, as though they were disinterested persons, and only insist upon your maintaining them, as a testimony of your owning their authority over you, they may be induced by my example, to be as little oppressive to you, and as free from all mercenary views as I am." He considers that ver. 20 shows that these false teachers were rigorous and oppressive in their exactions upon the Corinthians.

Ver. 16—21. The apostle would not have them think he was guilty of folly in what he said to vindicate himself, ver. 16. Boasting of ourselves usually is not only a sign of a proud mind, but a mark of folly also; however, says the apostle, if ye count it folly in me to boast a little, yet give due regard to what I shall say. He would not have them think that boasting, or glorying in what we have, is commanded by the Lord, ver. 17, nor yet that this is always necessary in our own vindication. It is the duty and practice of Christians, in obedience to the command and example of the Lord, rather to humble and abase themselves; yet prudence must direct in what circumstances it is needful to do that which we may do lawfully, even the speaking of what God has wrought for us, and in us, and by us.

They should suffer him to boast a little; because they suffered others to do so; who had far less reason, ver. 18. But he would not glory in those things, though he had as much reason as others to do so. He glories in his infirmities, as he tells them afterward. They had not shown wisdom with respect to their false teachers, enduring to be brought into dependence upon them, to have their substance devoured; and even to be treated with contempt and disdain, and to endure outrages. Doubtless this refers to facts in which the character of the false apostles had been manifested. It is astonishing to see how such men bring their followers into bondage, how they take from them and insult them, yet how all this is borne with. Seeing that the Corinthians, or some among them, could so easily bear much from the false apostles, it was reasonable for the apostle to desire and expect they should bear with what might seem to them an indiscretion in him, since the circumstances of the case made it needful, that wheresoever any were bold, he should be bold also, ver. 21.

Ver. 22—33. The apostle gives an account of his labours and sufferings; not out of pride or vain-glory, but to the honour of God, who had enabled him to do and suffer so much for the cause of Christ; and shows wherein he excelled the false apostles, who would lessen his character and usefulness among the Corinthians. Thus such light has been thrown

upon his ministry, character, and history, as will instruct the church to the end of the world. It astonishes us to reflect upon this brief enumeration of his dangers, hardships, and sufferings, during a long course of years. Also, to observe his patience, perseverance, diligence, cheerfulness, and usefulness, in the midst of all these trials.

He mentions the privileges of his birth, ver. 22, which were equal to any they could pretend to. He was of a family among the jews, that never intermarried with the gentiles. He could boast of his being descended from Jacob as well as they. It should seem from hence, that the false apostles, who gave disturbance to the gentile converts, were of the jewish race. He mentions his apostleship; that he was more than an ordinary minister of Christ, ver. 23. God had counted him faithful, and had put him into the ministry: he had been a useful minister of Christ unto them, they had found full proofs of his ministry. He chiefly insists that he had been an extraordinary sufferer for Christ. He gloried in the grace of God which had enabled him to be more abundant in labours, and to endure very great sufferings, ver. 23. When the apostle would prove himself an extraordinary minister, he proves that he had been an extraordinary sufferer. He was accused to all the hard treatment of those who are accounted the worst of men. As to the jews, whenever he fell into their hands, they never spared him. Forty stripes was the utmost their law allowed, Deut. 25. 3, but it was usual with them, that they might not exceed, to abate one at least of that number. And to have the abatement of one only, was all the favour Paul received from them. The gentiles were not restricted to that moderation, and among them he was thrice beaten with rods. Once he was stoned in a popular tumult, Acts 14. 19. Thrice he suffered shipwreck. A night and a day he had been in the deep, in the sea, perhaps upon part of the wreck, in extreme suffering and peril.

Thus he was all his days a constant confessor; wherever he went he was exposed to perils. If he journeyed by land, or voyaged by sea, he was in perils of robbers, or enemies. The jews, his own countrymen, sought to kill him, or do him a mischief: the heathen, to

whom he was sent, were not more kind to him. If he was in the city, or in the wilderness, still he was in peril. He was in peril, not only among avowed enemies, but among false brethren. Besides all this, he had great weariness and painfulness in his ministerial labours. Paul was a stranger to wealth and plenty, power and pleasure, preferment and ease; he was in watchings often, and exposed to hunger and thirst; in fastings often, it may be out of necessity; and endured cold and nakedness, ver. 27. Thus was he, who was one of the greatest blessings of the age, used as if he had been the plague of his generation. This is not all: as an apostle, the care of all the churches lay on him, ver. 28. He mentions this last, as if this lay the heaviest upon him, and as if he could better bear all the persecutions of his enemies than the scandals that were in the churches of which he had the oversight. There was not a weak christian, with whom he did not sympathize; nor did any one stumble or turn aside, but he was affected therewith, ver. 29. See what little reason we have to love the pomp and plenty of this world, when this blessed apostle felt so much hardship in it. All this he accounted his honour; and therefore, he says, if my adversaries oblige me to it in my own vindication, I will glory in these my infirmities, ver. 30. Sufferings for righteousness' sake will, most of any thing, redound to our honour.

In the two last verses, he mentions the danger he was in at Damascus, soon after his conversion. This is recorded, Acts 9. 24, 25. And the apostle confirms his narrative with a solemn appeal to the omniscience of God, ver. 31. It is a great comfort to a good man, that the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is a God that knoweth all things, knows the truth of all he says, and knows all he does, and all he suffers for his sake.

Next to the history of Christ, the persecutions and sufferings which this excellent and useful servant of God met with every where and from all sorts of persons, with the unkindness even of his own converts, cast severe reflections on the folly and wickedness of mankind. Compared with his, our utmost diligence and services appear unworthy of notice, and our difficulties and trials scarcely

can be perceived. It may well lead us to inquire whether we really are followers of Christ. Here we may study patience, courage, and firm trust in God. Here we may learn to think less of ourselves, and more of the great concerns of godliness, and to consider all trials as nothing when sustained in a good cause. Here we may learn to be content with things which the world calls mean, ardently to desire to do good to others, and to be animated with the hopes of success, notwithstanding our infirmities. These indeed we should especially look at, if ever we are constrained to glory; we should ever keep in view our obligations to the Lord, from whom all our distinctions are received. We should ever strictly adhere to truth, as in his presence; and should refer all to his glory, as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is blessed for evermore.

32. Arias was an arabian king, and father-in-law to Herod Antipas. In the unsettled state of affairs after the death of Tiberius, he seems to have assumed authority over Damascus. It may be observed that these sufferings do not include those recorded in the latter part of the Acts from ch. 20, as this epistle was written previously to that period.

Paley remarks that this account, while it agrees in the main fact with the narrative, Acts 9, is related with such difference of circumstances as to render it utterly improbable that the one had been derived from the other.

CHAPTER XII.

The apostle here vindicates his authority, by the extraordinary revelations that had been made to him, ver. 1-6, though they were followed with some humbling circumstances which were nevertheless improved to his spiritual advantage, 7-10. He shows that several eminent signs of an apostle were in him, which ought to have encouraged the Corinthians to speak well of him, without bringing him under a necessity of seeming to boast of them himself, 11-13. Declares his purpose of making them a friendly visit for their edification, without any expense to them, 14-19. But expresses his fear, lest he should be forced to use severity in his dealing with some among them, 20, 21.

Ver. 1-6. The circumstances in which the apostle was then placed, rendered that conduct necessary which otherwise would not have been expedient. He therefore proceeded to speak of the visions of Divine glory, and the revelation of heavenly things with which he had been favoured. There can be no

doubt that the apostle speaks of himself, though he uses the third person. He knew a sincere believer in Christ, who, fourteen years before, had a most extraordinary vision. Whether he was in the body or not, God alone knew; but his outward senses were entirely closed, and only his mental powers exercised. And whether heavenly things were brought down to him, so to speak, while his body lay enlanced, as in the case of ancient prophets; or whether his soul was dislodged from the body for a time, and actually taken up into heaven, or whether he was taken up, body and soul together, he knew not. This shows that the soul is capable of perception, activity, and enjoyment, distinct from the body. And this man, with whom the apostle was so intimately acquainted, was taken up into paradise, the place of happiness, of which Eden was the type, and there heard such words as man could not possibly speak, since it was God's will that the discoveries made of himself in that glorious world should not be declared on earth. We are not capable, nor is it fit we should know the particulars of that glorious place and state; it is our duty and interest to give diligence to make sure to ourselves a mansion there; if that be cleared to us, then we should long to be removed thither, to abide there for ever.

Of this man, so highly favoured, he would glory, though in himself, that is, as to any thing properly his own, he would not glory, except in his infirmities. And though he should glory in such matters, he would not therein act foolishly, as he could do it with perfect truth. However, he would forbear speaking further on that subject, lest some of his friends should think more highly of him than his manifest conduct and ministry authorized, and thus be tempted to honour him too much, and undervalue other faithful ministers. Thus was he, who was not behind the chiefest of the apostles, very eminent for his humility. It is an excellent thing to have a lowly spirit in the midst of high advancements: and those who abase themselves shall be exalted. This account which the apostle gives of his vision, should check our curious desires after forbidden knowledge, and teach us to improve the revelation God has given us in his word. Paul himself, who had

been in the third heaven, did not attempt to publish to the world what he had heard there, but adhered to the doctrine of Christ. On that foundation the church is built, and on that we must build our faith and hope. And while this teaches us to enlarge our expectations of the glory that shall be revealed, it should render us contented with our usual method of learning the truth and will of God.

1. Visions refer to outward representations, made to the mind in a trance while awake, or in a supernatural dream. Revelations signify Divine instructions by immediate inspiration, likewise the Divine interpretations of the things exhibited in the visions.—*Guyse*.

2. "I know a man"—*Schoolfield*.

It is equally possible with God to represent distant things to the imagination in the body, as if the soul was absent from it and present with them : or to transport both soul and body for what time he pleases to heaven, or to give the rational soul a separate existence in the celestial regions for a season, and in the mean while to preserve animal life in a miraculous way, to the body. But since the apostle himself could not be positive whether his soul was in the body, or whether one or both were actually in heaven or not, it would be vain curiosity for us to seek to determine it.—*Guyse*.

Ver. 7—10. The apostle would not have them forget that he was a poor sinner, wholly dependent on mercy and grace, amidst all his honourable distinctions; and he gives an account of the method God took to keep him humble, and to prevent his being lifted up above measure, on account of the visions and revelations which he had. When God's people communicate their experiences, let them always remember to notice what God has done to keep them humble, as well as what he has done in favour to them, and for their advancement. He was pained with a thorn in the flesh, and buffeted with a messenger of Satan, ver. 7. We are not told what this was, whether some great trouble, or some great temptation. Some think it was bodily pain or sickness; others think it was the indignities done him by the false apostles, and the opposition he met with from them. However this was, God often brings this good out of evil, that the reproaches of our enemies help to hide pride from us; and this is certain, that what the apostle calls a thorn in his flesh, was for a time very grievous to him. But the thorns Christ wore for us, and with which he was crowned, sanctify and make easy all

the thorns in the flesh we may at any time be afflicted with; for he suffered, being tempted, that he might be able to succour them that are tempted. Temptations to sin are most grievous thorns; they are messengers of Satan, to buffet us. Indeed it is great grievance to a good man, to be so much as tempted to sin. The design was to keep the apostle humble, lest he should be exalted above measure. Paul himself knew he had not yet attained, neither was already perfect; and yet he was in danger of being lifted up with pride. If God love us, he will keep us from being exalted above measure; and spiritual burdens are ordered, to cure spiritual pride. This thorn in the flesh is said to be a messenger of Satan; which he did not send with a good design, but, on the contrary, with ill intentions, to discourage the apostle, who had been so highly favoured of God, and to hinder him in his work. But God designed this for good, and he overruled it for good.

However painful the process may be, the wise christian will be thankful to be kept from being exalted above measure, and whatever there is in our experience, of outward trials or of inward conflicts and temptations, that tends to counterbalance more flattering dispensations, and to mortify pride, it is a thorn in the flesh. And it is especially matter of gratitude, when the end is effected without our being left to commit actual sin, or to dishonour the gospel. The apostle prayed earnestly to God for the removal of this sore grievance. Prayer is a salve for every sore, a remedy for every malady; and when we are afflicted with thorns in the flesh, we should give ourselves to prayer. Therefore we are sometimes tempted, that we may learn to pray. The apostle besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from him, ver. 8. Though afflictions are sent for our spiritual benefit, yet we may pray to God for the removal of them: we ought to desire also, that they may effect the end for which they are designed. The apostle prayed earnestly, and repeated his requests; he besought the Lord thrice, often. So that if an answer be not given to the first prayer, nor to the second, we are to continue praying till we receive an answer. Christ himself prayed to his Father thrice. Troubles are sent, to

teach us to pray; they are continued, to teach us to continue instant in prayer.

When buffeted of Satan we are to apply to Him, who suffered being tempted, that he might be able to succour those who are tempted; and we should be frequent as well as earnest, in beseeching that those temptations and trials may depart, which are likely to hinder our usefulness, or to endanger the credit of our profession. We have the answer given to the apostle's prayer; that, although the trouble was not removed, yet an equivalent should be granted; My grace is sufficient for thee. Though God accepts the prayer of faith, yet he does not always answer it in the letter; as he sometimes grants in wrath, so he sometimes denies in love. When God does not remove our troubles and temptations, yet, if he gives us grace sufficient for us, we have no reason to complain. It is a great comfort to us, whatever thorns in the flesh we are pained with, that God's grace is sufficient for us. Grace signifies the goodwill of God towards us, and that is enough to enlighten and enliven us, sufficient to strengthen and comfort us; to support our souls, and cheer up our spirits, in all afflictions and distresses. Also, the good work of God in us; the grace we receive from the fulness that is in Christ our head; and from him there shall be communicated that which is suitable and seasonable, and sufficient for his members. Christ Jesus understands our case, and knows our need, and will proportion the remedy to our malady, and not only strengthen us, but glorify himself. His strength is made perfect in our weakness. Thus his grace is manifested and magnified.

Observe the use which the apostle made of this dispensation. He gloried in his infirmities, ver. 9, and took pleasure in them, ver. 10. He does not mean sinful infirmities, those we have reason to be ashamed of and grieved at, but he means his afflictions, his reproaches, necessities, persecutions, and distresses for Christ's sake, ver. 10. And the reason of his glory and joy on account of these things, was, that they were fitting opportunities for Christ to manifest the power and sufficiency of his grace resting upon him, by which he had so much experience of the strength of Divine grace, that he could say,

When I am weak, then am I strong. When we are weak in ourselves, then we are strong in the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ; when we feel that we are weak in ourselves, then we go out of ourselves to Christ, receive strength from him, and experience most largely the supplies of Divine strength and grace. We may often find, that when we most feel our weakness, we are most strong in the Lord, and when we begin to think ourselves strong, we are left to discover, and perhaps to expose our own weakness. This passage contains a most express example of praying to Christ, confiding in Him, and glorifying Him as the source of grace and power.

8. "Thrice" frequently is put to signify often, many times—*J. P. Smith*. It is of no importance to us to know exactly what this thorn in the flesh was. It was some severe humiliating trial or falling, tending to humble spiritual pride. God often, perhaps always, sends thorns in the flesh to believers for the same purpose, but in very different ways, by infirmities of body, mind, or temper, or even by suffering Satan to use strong temptations to outward sin.

Shuttleworth says, This thorn has been generally supposed to have been some bodily disease, but from the apostle's assertion that it was counteracted by the support of Divine grace, it seems more natural to imagine it must have been some intellectual or moral infirmity.

9. Or "overshadow me," as a tent or tabernacle affording shelter and protection.

Ver. 11—21. The apostle blames the Corinthians that they made it needful for him to insist on his own vindication. They compelled him to commend himself, who ought to have been commended by them, ver. 11. They had good reason to speak well of him, as being in nothing behind the chiefest apostles, because he had given them full proof and evidence of his apostleship; for the signs of an apostle were wrought among them in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds. We owe it to good men, to stand up in the defence of their reputation; and we are under special obligations to those by whom we have received benefit, especially spiritual benefit, to own them as instruments in God's hand of good to us, and to vindicate them when calumniated by others. How much soever we are, or ought to be, esteemed by others, we ought always to think humbly of ourselves. This great apostle thought himself to be nothing, though in truth he was not behind the chiefest apostles. So far was he from seeking praise from

men, though he tells them their duty to vindicate his reputation : so far was he from applauding himself, when forced to insist upon his own necessary self-defence. He gives a large account of his behaviour and kind intentions to them ; in which we observe the characters of a faithful minister of the gospel.

1. He was not willing to be burdensome to them, nor did he seek theirs, but them. He says, ver. 13, he had not been burdensome to them for the time past, and tells them, ver. 14, he would not be burdensome to them for the time to come, when he should come to them. He sought not to enrich himself, but to save their souls : he did not desire to make a property of them to himself, but to gain them over to Christ, whose servant he was. Those who aim at clothing themselves with the fleece of the flock, and take no care of the sheep, are hirelings, and not good shepherds. Ministers are as far as possible to imitate the conduct of affectionate parents.

2. He would gladly spend and be spent for them, ver. 15 : he was willing to take pains and to suffer loss for their good. He would spend his time, his strength, his interest, his all, to do them service ; so spend as to be spent, and be like a candle or lamp which consumes itself, to give light to others.

3. He did not abate in love to them, notwithstanding their unkindness and ingratitude ; and was contented to care for them, though the more abundantly he loved them, the less he was loved, ver. 15. This is applicable to other relations : if others are wanting in duty to us, it does not follow that we may neglect our duty to them ; however hard it is to spend and be spent for those who make unkind returns, and who seem to love those least who love them most.

4. He was careful not only that he himself should not be burdensome, but that none he employed should be so. This seems the meaning of ver. 16—18. If any should object, that though he did not himself burden them, yet that he, being crafty, caught them with guile, that is, he sent those among them who pillaged from them—this was not so, says the apostle ; I did not make a gain of you myself, nor by any of them I sent ; nor did Titus, nor any others. We walked by the same spirit, and in the same steps. They all agreed to do all the

good they could, without being burdensome ; to promote the gospel, and make it as easy to them as possible. Or, this may be read with an interrogation, as utterly disclaiming any guile in himself and others toward them.

5. He did all things for edifying, ver. 19. This was his great aim and design, to do good, to lay the foundation well, and then with care and diligence to build the superstructure.

6. He would not shrink from his duty, for fear of displeasing them, though he was so careful to make himself easy to them. Therefore he was resolved to be faithful in reproofing sin, though he was therein found to be such as they would not, ver. 20. The apostle here mentioned several sins too commonly found among professors of religion ; debates, envyings, wraths, strifes, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults. Although those guilty of such sins, can hardly bear to be reproofed for them, yet faithful ministers must not fear offending the guilty by sharp reproofs, as they are needful, in public and in private.

7. He was grieved at the apprehension that he should find scandalous sins among them, not duly repented of. This would be the cause of great humiliation and lamentation. The falls and misdeeds of professors are humbling to a minister ; and God sometimes takes this way to humble those who might be tempted to be lifted up ; I fear lest my God will humble me among you. We have reason to bewail those who sin, and do not repent ; to bewail many that have sinned, and have not repented, ver. 21. If these have not, as yet, grace to mourn and lament their own case, their case is the more lamentable ; and those who love God, and love them, should mourn for them.

These last verses show to what excesses the false teachers had drawn aside their deluded followers. How grievous it is that such evils should be found among professors of the gospel ! Yet thus it is, and has been too often, and it was so even in the days of the apostles.

14. A difficulty occurs here, as only one visit of St. Paul to Corinth is noticed in the Acts, previous to the time when this epistle was written. *Michaelis* considers that the apostle had visited Corinth a second time, on his return from Crete, before he went to winter at Nicopolis, but this visit is not noticed in the Acts

because the voyage itself is unnoticed. *Paley* thinks that the apostle refers to the third time when he had purposed to come, having been previously disappointed of his purpose, as mentioned in the early part of this epistle.

CHAPTER XIII.

The apostle threatens obstinate offenders at his next coming among the Corinthians, and gives the reasons, ver. 1-6. He prays for their reformation to prevent it, which would give him the greatest pleasure, 7-10. And concludes the epistle with a salutation and benediction, 11-14.

Ver. 1-6. The apostle again adverts to the subject of his intended visit. It is probable the apostle rather refers to the purpose he had formed, than to three separate visits, yet it is possible he may have been twice at Corinth before. He had till now delayed his coming, to afford opportunity to the offenders to repent and return to their duty, and had contented himself with warnings, but now, in the view of being personally present, he determined to proceed against them. In doing this he would follow the rule laid down by our Saviour, for disposing of offences in the church, and that every thing should be proved by competent witnesses, Matt. 18, 15-17.—(87.)

He kept account how often he endeavoured, and what pains he took with these Corinthians for their good; and we may be sure that an account is kept, and we must be reckoned with for the helps we have had for our souls, and how we have improved them. He had told them before, he feared God would humble him among them, because he should find some who had sinned and had not repented; and now he declares he would not spare such, but would inflict censures upon them, which are thought to have been accompanied in those early times with visible and extraordinary tokens of Divine displeasure. Though it is God's gracious method to bear long with sinners, yet he will not bear always; at length he will come, and will not spare those who remain obstinate and impenitent, notwithstanding all his methods to reclaim and reform them. He would be thus severe, for a proof of Christ speaking in him, which they sought after, ver. 3. The evidence of his apostleship was necessary for the confirmation and success of the gospel he preached; and therefore such as de-

nied that, were justly and severely to be censured. The false teachers designed to make the Corinthians call this matter into question, yet they had not weak, but strong or mighty proofs of it, ver. 3, notwithstanding the contempt which by some was cast upon him. Christ himself appeared in his crucifixion, as if he had been only a weak and helpless man, and was despised as unable to save himself, but he lived by the power of God; his resurrection and life manifested his Divine power, ver. 4. So the apostles, how mean and contemptible soever they appeared to the world, and they cannot appear more weak and despicable in the eyes of carnal men than Jesus did when he hung upon the cross, yet, as instruments, manifested the power of God, particularly the power of his grace, in converting the world to christianity. As a proof unto those who among the Corinthians sought evidence of Christ's speaking in the apostle, he puts them upon proving their own christianity, ver. 5. Examine yourselves. Let them prove their tempers, conduct, and experience, as gold is assayed or proved by the touch stone. If they could prove their own christianity, this would be a proof of his apostleship; for if they were in the faith, if Jesus Christ was in them, this was a proof that Christ spake in him, because by his ministry they had believed. He had been not only an instructor, but a father to them. It could not be imagined that Divine powers should go with his ministrations, if he had not his commission from on high. If therefore they could prove themselves not to be reprobates, not to be rejected of Christ, he trusted they would know that he was not a reprobate, ver. 6, not disowned by Christ. They ought to know that Christ Jesus was indeed in them, by the influences, graces, and indwelling of his Spirit, by his image renewed on their souls; by his kingdom set up in their hearts; and by possessing their supreme love and affection. Unless they were such, they would, at the last day, be rejected as dross by the refiner.

What the apostle here says of the duty of the Corinthians to examine themselves, is applicable to the great duty of all who call themselves christians, to examine themselves concerning their spiritual state. We should examine whether we

be in the faith. It is a matter in which we may be deceived, and wherein deceit is highly dangerous. We are concerned to put the question to our own souls, whether Christ is in us, or not; and Christ is in us, except we be reprobates; either we are true christians, or we are deceivers.

Therefore, let us daily bring ourselves and all our works and affections to be assayed by the touchstone of the scriptures; that we may get well acquainted with ourselves, obtain assurance that will not shrink from examination, and possess that hope which maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost. Unless Christ be in us by his Spirit, his image, and the governing power of his love, our faith is dead, and we are yet disapproved by our Judge.

5. The word "*adokimos*," here translated reprobate, in its primary signification is applied to metals or coins, which have been rejected as not standing the test of purity. As when proved by their proper test, if found not to be pure and genuine, they are rejected as base; so men, if their faith and actions do not stand that test, to which it pleases God they should be sub, are rejected as worthless. The word "*dokimo*" means, in like manner, approved after trial. These words are of frequent occurrence in the New Testament, and have been variously rendered in the english version. The prominent idea in both is probation, with its possible results—*Tolline*. See *Vatpy*. This word is always used in reference to a previous trial, and respects men as moral agents. Believers are no doubt said to be predestinated according to the good pleasure of God's will, to be holy, and without blame before him in love, but it is not necessary to suppose, that the wicked perish in consequence of any decree of reprobation; they are always represented as "eating the fruit of their own ways."—*Lothian*

The sense seems to be "Do ye not know concerning yourselves, and find that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless, indeed, ye be not genuine christians, but deserving rejection, and therefore destitute of proof that Christ is in you!"—*Bloomfield*. Do ye not know yourselves, when the subject of knowledge is so near you, and is always before you? Are you not sensible that Jesus Christ is dwelling in you, by the sanctifying and transforming influences of his Spirit, unless ye are mere nominal christians, and such as, whatever your gifts be, will finally be rejected and disapproved, as silver that will not stand the touchstone?—*Hodderidge*.

Ver. 7-10. The apostle prayed to God that the Corinthians might do no evil, ver. 7. The most desirable thing we can ask of God, for ourselves and our friends, is to be kept from sin, that we and they may not do evil. And it is most needful that we often pray to God for his grace to keep us, because without that we cannot

keep ourselves. We are more concerned to pray that we may not do evil, than that we may not suffer evil.

The great desire of faithful ministers is, that the gospel they preach may be honoured, however their persons may be vilified. We should adorn our holy religion, by doing that which is honest, and of good report; by walking as becomes the gospel of Christ. And that they might be free from censure when he came to them. This is intimated, ver. 8. We can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth. If they did not evil, nor acted contrary to their profession of the gospel, the apostle had no power or authority to punish them. He had said before, ch. 10. 8, and says here, ver. 10. The power which the Lord has given me, was to edification, not to destruction. He could not, he would not, he dared not, he had no commission to act against the truth; and it is remarkable, how the apostle rejoiced in this. We are glad, says he, ver. 9, when we are weak, and ye are strong; that is, that we have no power to censure those who are strong in faith, and fruitful in good works.

He desired their perfection, ver. 9, that they might be sincere, and aim at perfection. He not only desired that they might be kept from sin, but also that they might grow in grace, and increase in holiness: and that all which was amiss among them might be rectified and reformed. This was the great end of his writing this epistle, and the freedom he used with them by writing these things, those friendly admonitions and warnings, being absent, that so, being present, he should not use sharpness, ver. 10, nor proceed to the utmost extremity in the exercise of the power the Lord had given him as an apostle, ch. 10. 8.

We are earnestly to pray to God for those we caution, that they may cease to do evil, and learn to do well: and we should be glad for others to be strong in the grace of Christ, though it should be the means of exposing our own weakness. And let us also pray that we may be kept from misusing the abilities committed to us, and that we may be enabled to make a proper use of all our talents.

Ver. 11-14. The apostle concludes this epistle with good wishes for their spiritual welfare. In order to which he gives them several good exhortations.

To be perfect, or to be knit together in love, which would tend greatly to their benefit and advantage, as a church, or christian society. To be of good comfort under all the sufferings and persecutions they might endure for the cause of Christ, or any calamities and disappointments they might meet with in the world. To be of one mind, which would greatly tend to their comfort. The apostle would have them to be of the same opinion and judgment. If this could not be attained, yet he exhorts them to live in peace, that differences in opinion should not cause alienation of affections; that they should be at peace among themselves. They should avoid debates, envyings, back-bitings, whisperings, and all things contrary to peace. He encourages them with the promise of God's presence. The God of love and peace shall be with you, ver. 11. God is the God of love and peace. He is the Author of peace, and Lover of concord; he hath loved us, and is willing to be at peace with us. He commands us to love him, and to be reconciled to him, and also that we love one another, and be at peace among ourselves. God will be with them who live in love and peace. He will love those who love peace; he will dwell with them here, and they shall dwell with him for ever. Such shall have God's gracious presence here and be admitted to his glorious presence hereafter. He directs them to salute each other, and sends kind salutations from those with him, ver. 12, 13. He would have them thus testify their affection to one another.

How short-lived are the enjoyments and friendships of the present state! The nearest and most affectionate friends must separate and pronounce the painful word, Farewell! How careful should they be to improve opportunities of intercourse by exciting each other to every christian virtue! Let it be our constant aim so to walk that the separation may be only for a time, and that we may meet in that happy world where parting will be unknown.—(87)

He concludes with the apostolical benediction, ver. 14. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Thus the apostle desires that the free favour, mercy, and salva-

tion of the Lord Jesus Christ, the special love of God the Father to them as the objects of his choice, and his adopted children, and as partakers in all the gifts, graces, and consolations of the Holy Ghost, might be with them all. So that all blessings from the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, in whose one name they had been baptized, might really be conferred on them, and constantly enjoyed by them all; to the glory of the three Persons in the Holy Trinity, according to the parts they sustain in the great work of man's redemption.

He wishes they may partake of all those benefits which Christ of his free grace and favour, has purchased; the Father out of his free love has purposed; and the Holy Ghost applies, communicates to, and bestows upon the elect.—(12.)

Observe the distinct introduction of the Saviour, of God his heavenly Father, and of the Holy Spirit, as voluntary, sovereign, and effective agents; and in the parity of powers which is manifestly attributed to these sacred Persons. No blessing can be greater, or imply higher perfections in its Author, than the *grace* which is uniformly celebrated in the apostolic writings, as the *cause* of our deliverance from the greatest of all possible evils, and our acquisition of the greatest possible good. This is the grace of Christ; and in this connexion it is most evidently to be understood as the correlative of that *love* which is prayed for as the gift of the almighty Father. It is also reasonable to understand the *communion*, or participation, of the Holy Spirit, as falling under the same description of blessings as the *grace* and *love*; consequently denoting moral and spiritual influences on the mind.—(95.)

What more can we desire for ourselves or our brethren, than this often-repeated apostolical blessing, the grace of Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost! May we then at all times, when these words are in our lips, or spoken in our hearing, so enter into their meaning, with fervent affections, and enlarged desires and expectations; that the blessings implied in them may be upon us and all fellow-worshippers, now and for evermore, Amen.

THE EPISTLE TO THE GALATIANS.

In the Acts of the Apostles, ch. 16 and 18, we find mention of two visits of St. Paul to Galatia, in which country the christian faith was planted early. The date of the Epistle is uncertain, but it was among the earliest writings of the apostle. Its genuineness was never doubted.

The churches in Galatia were formed partly of converted jews, and partly of gentile converts, as was generally the case. A judaizing teacher seems to have questioned St. Paul's authority, insinuating that Peter and the other apostles were superior to him, and more to be regarded. This false teacher desired that all the gentiles should submit to circumcision, and consequently engage to observe the whole law of Moses, as if the gospel of Christ by itself, was insufficient to justify and save them. From ch. 6. 12, 13, this teacher appears to have been an immoral character, who acted from vain-glory and from fear, desiring to retain the favour of the jews, and escape the persecutions raised against the apostle.

These circumstances induced St. Paul to write to the churches of Galatia with his own hand, Gal. 6. 11, contrary to his usual practice in dictating letters. We find the principal scope is to assert his apostolic character and the doctrines he taught, that he might confirm the Galatian churches in the faith of Christ, especially with respect to the important point of justification by faith alone. He exposes the errors lately taught among them, by demonstrating the true nature and use of the ceremonial law, and seeks to revive the principles of christianity which he had first taught.

The contents may be stated as, (1) The introduction, ch. 1. 1—5 (2) A vindication of St. Paul's apostolic doctrine and authority, as an immediate apostle of Christ, inferior to no other, 1. 6—24, and ch. 2. (3) Arguments against the advocates for observing the mosaic law, showing that justification is by faith in Christ alone, 3. 1—18. The design of God in giving the law, namely, not to justify but to convince of sins, and so to lead convinced souls to Christ, that, being justified by faith in him, they might obtain the benefit of the promise, 3. 19—24. The apostle infers that believers are freed from the mosaic law, 3. 25—29, and illustrates his inference by the jewish church, 4. 1—7. (4) The apostle shows the folly and weakness of the Galatians in subjecting themselves to the law, 4. 8—31; 5. 1—9. (5) Instructions and exhortations for christian behaviour are given, partly concerning a right use of christian freedom, 5. 10—26, 6. 1—10. (6) In conclusion, the apostle sums up the topics discussed in the epistle, 6. 11—18.

The epistle is written with much energy and power of language, and its subject is mainly the same as that which is discussed in the epistle to the Romans, that is, *justification by faith alone*. In this epistle, however, attention is particularly directed to the point, that men are justified by faith *without the works of the law of Moses*, and to use words from *MacKnight*, the two epistles, when taken together, form a complete proof, that justification is not to be obtained meritoriously, either by works of morality, or by rites and ceremonies, though of Divine appointment, but is a free gift, proceeding entirely from the mercy of God. *Paley* notices a difference in the manner of the apostle's treating the subject, in these two epistles, arising from the difference in his situation with respect to the two churches. To the Galatians, whose church he had founded, and by whom he was so well known, he speaks with considerable personal authority. To the Romans, he was comparatively unknown, and he puts the same points entirely upon argument.

The reader will perceive that the evils among the Galatians have been productive of benefit to the church at large. For by the apostle producing the evidences of his apostleship, and relating the history of his life, especially after conversion, we have the fullest assurance that he really was an apostle, called by Christ himself, and acknowledged by the other apostles; consequently we are assured that our faith in the doctrines of the gospel, as taught by him, is not built on the credit of men, but on the authority of God the Holy Spirit, by whom St. Paul was inspired, in the whole of the doctrine which he delivered to the world.

Of the importance of the doctrines prominently set forth in this epistle, *Jather* thus speaks in his enlarged commentary thereon. "We have to fear as the greatest and nearest danger, lest Satan take from us this doctrine of faith, and bring into the church again the doctrine of works and of men's traditions. Wherefore it is very necessary that this doctrine be kept in continual practice and public exercise, both of reading and hearing. And although it is ever so well known, ever so exactly learned, yet the devil continually rages about, seeking to devour us. Likewise our flesh and old man is yet alive. Besides this, all kinds of temptations vex and oppress us on every side; wherefore this doctrine never can be taught, urged, and repented enough. If this doctrine be lost, then is also the doctrine of truth, life, and salvation, lost and gone. If this doctrine flourish, then all good things flourish; religion, the true service of God, the glory of God, the right knowledge of all things which are necessary for a christian man to know."

CHAPTER I.

The apostle Paul prefaces his epistle to the churches of Galatia, with asserting his apostolic character, in opposition to such as lessened it, and with a salutation and doxology,

ver. 1—5. He sharply reproveth the Galatians for so soon revolting from the gospel of Christ, under the influence of evil teachers, 6—9. Proves the Divine authority of his doctrine and mission, by the end of his

preaching, and by his having received them, not from man, but by immediate revelation from Christ himself, 10—12. And, to convince them of this, he declares what he was before his conversion and calling, 13, 14. And how he proceeded after it, 15—24.

Ver. 1—5. This epistle is sent from Paul. He was an apostle, he is not afraid to style himself so, an apostle, not of man, neither by man; he had not the common call of an ordinary minister, but an extraordinary call from Heaven to this office. He never received his qualification for it, nor his designation to it, by the authority of men, but had both the one and the other directly from above. For he was an apostle by Jesus Christ, he had his instructions and commission immediately from him, and consequently from God the Father, who was one with him in respect of his Divine nature, and who had appointed him, as Mediator, to be the Apostle and the High Priest of our profession. He adds, Who raised him from the dead; herein God the Father gave public testimony to Christ's being his Son and the promised Messiah. The Christians of the place where he was, he is ready to own as his brethren, notwithstanding his own superior character and attainments, and to join them with himself. Herein, he shows his humility, and how far he was from an assuming temper; and hereby it would appear that he had their concurrence in the doctrine he had preached, and was now about to confirm: it was published and professed by others as well as by himself.

This epistle is sent to the churches of Galatia. There were several churches in that country, and it should seem that all of them were more or less corrupted through the arts of seducers who had crept in. Therefore Paul, being deeply affected with their state, wrote to them. The apostle, and the brethren who were with him, wish these churches grace and peace from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace includes God's good-will towards us, and his good work upon us; and peace implies all that inward comfort, or outward prosperity, which is really needful for us. They come from God the Father, as the Fountain, through Jesus Christ, as the Channel of conveyance; both these the apostle wishes for these Christians, But

observe, first grace, and then peace; there can be no true peace without grace. Having mentioned the Lord Jesus Christ, he cannot pass without enlarging upon his love; and adds, ver. 4, Who gave himself for our sins. Jesus Christ gave himself for our sins, as a great Sacrifice to make atonement for us; this the justice of God required, and to this he freely submitted for our sakes.

The force and power of sin are strongly set forth in the words, "Who gave himself for our sins." Here is to be observed the infinite greatness of the price bestowed, and then it will appear evidently, that the power of sin is so great, that it could by no means be put away except the Son of God be given for it. He that considers these things well, understands that sin is a thing the most horrible that can be expressed; which ought to move us, and make us afraid indeed. But we are careless, we make light of sin; and although it brings with it the remorse of conscience, we think it is of so little importance, that we may put it away by some work or merit of our own. (58)

And this passage offers a singular comfort to the consciences of all men who are terrified with the greatness of their sins; for although sin is such a tyrant, yet as Christ has overcome it through his death, it cannot overcome those who believe in him. Let us especially mark well the words, "for our sins." It is easy to believe that Christ, the Son of God, was given for the sins of Peter, of Paul, and of other saints, but it is a hard thing for those who judge themselves unworthy of it, to believe that Christ was given for their numerous and aggravated sins. Here our weak nature starts back, and dares not to come nigh unto God, nor to promise that so great a treasure shall be freely given to her, but would first be made worthy by her own works. But this is nothing else than that man's reason vain would that sin were of no greater force and power than it dreams it to be; and would present unto God a feigned and counterfeit sinner, who really is not afraid, and has no feeling of sin. It would bring him that is whole, not him that has need of a physician; and though really it feels no sin, it would profess that Christ was given for our sins. To the world at

large these words, "for our sins," seem of little importance; therefore they understand them not, and in temptation, when they feel sin indeed, they are compelled to despair.—(68.)

To deliver us from this present evil world. Not only to redeem us from the wrath of God, and the curse of the law, but also to recover us from the corruption that is in the world through lust, and to rescue us from vicious practices and customs, to which we are naturally enslaved.

From hence note, 1. This present world is an evil world; it is become so by the sin of man, and it is so on account of the sin and sorrow with which it abounds, and the many snares and temptations to which we are exposed, as long as we continue in it. But, 2. Jesus Christ has died to deliver us from this present evil world; not presently to remove his people out of it, but to rescue them from the power of it, to keep them from the evil of it, and to bestow on them another and better world. This, the apostle informs us, he has done according to the will of God and our Father. In offering up himself a sacrifice for this end and purpose, he acted by the appointment of the Father, as well as with his own free consent; therefore we have the greatest reason to depend upon the efficacy and acceptableness of what he has done and suffered for us. Yea, from hence we have encouragement to look upon God as our Father, for thus the apostle here represents him. As he is the Father of our Lord Jesus, so in and through him life is also the Father of all true believers.

The apostle, having thus taken notice of the great love wherewith Christ hath loved us, solemnly ascribes praise and glory to God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom he had just before wished grace and peace. They are the proper objects of our worship and adoration, and all honour and glory are perpetually due to them, both on account of their own infinite excellences, and also on account of the many blessings we receive from them. But for those who are not delivered from this present evil world by the sanctification of the Spirit, it is presumptuous in them to expect exemption from its condemnation by the blood of Jesus.

4. "This present evil world." That is, the

corrupt life of man without Christ.—*Bishop's Bible.*

5. The boundary to weak, but sensitive and devout minds, which separates religion from superstition, is very narrow; and such persons will eagerly take refuge from the alarms of conscience, or the dread of death, in other modes of relief than that which is appointed. Where such morbid apprehensions exist, it is difficult to persuade the sufferers that the access to the throne of mercy has been made so easy as scripture assumes us that it is, and that, through the imputed righteousness of our Redeemer, all may obtain admission who humbly and earnestly ask for it.—*Shuttleworth.*

Ver. 6—9. Here the apostle begins a general reproof of the Galatian churches for their unsteadiness in the faith, upon which he afterwards enlarges. Their defection filled him with the greatest surprise and sorrow. There were several things by which their defection was greatly aggravated. They were removed from him that had called them. Not only from the apostle, who had been the instrument, but from God himself, by whose order the gospel was preached to them, and they invited to partake of the privileges, so that herein they had been guilty of a great abuse of his kindness and mercy towards them. They had been called into the grace of Christ. As the gospel was the most glorious discovery of Divine grace and mercy in Christ Jesus, so thereby they had been called to partake of the greatest blessings and benefits; justification, and reconciliation with God here, eternal life and happiness hereafter. These our Lord Jesus has purchased at the expense of his precious blood, and freely bestows upon all who sincerely accept of him. Therefore, in proportion to the greatness of the privileges they enjoyed, were their sin and folly in deserting it, and suffering themselves to be drawn from the established way of obtaining these blessings. They were soon removed. In a little time they lost that relish and esteem of this grace of Christ, which they seemed to have, and easily fell in with those who taught justification by the works of the law, who mingled it with the doctrine of Christ; and this was an instance of their weakness, and an aggravation of their guilt. They were removed to another gospel, which yet was not another. The doctrine of these judaizing teachers, is called another gospel, because it opened a different way of jus-

tification and salvation from that which was revealed in the gospel, namely, by works, and not by faith in Christ. Yet he adds, Which is not another; you will find it to be no gospel at all: not really another gospel, but perverting the gospel of Christ. Those who would establish any other way to heaven than what the gospel of Christ reveals, will find themselves wretchedly mistaken. The error was virtually a renunciation of the gospel, and destructive in its nature. Their new opinions were incompatible with the true gospel, a fatal delusion, concluding all under condemnation who were given up to it.

Thus the apostle endeavours to impress upon these Galatians a due sense of their guilt in forsaking the gospel-way of justification; yet at the same time he tempers his reproof with mildness and tenderness towards them, and represents them as drawn into it by the arts and industry of some that troubled them. In reproofing others, as we should be faithful, so we should also be gentle, and endeavour to restore them in the spirit of meekness. He was confident that the gospel he had preached to them, was the only true gospel. He was so fully persuaded of this, that he pronounces an anathema upon those who pretended to preach any other gospel, ver. 9. But it is only against those who overturn the foundation of the covenant of grace, by setting up the works of the law in the place of Christ's righteousness, and corrupt Christianity with Judaism, that Paul denounces this. He puts a case; not as if it were possible for an angel from heaven to be the messenger of a lie: but the more to strengthen what he was about to say. Indeed, if it were possible for an angel of light to come from heaven, and preach a doctrine contrary to the free justification of a sinner by faith in the merits of Christ alone, he must have become an apostate spirit, an enemy to Christ, and accursed in himself. The apostle solemnly denounces, as accursed, every one who attempts to lay so false a foundation. All other gospels than that of the grace of Christ, whether more flattering to self-righteous pride, or more favourable to worldly lusts, are devices of Satan. And while we declare that every kind and degree of antinomianism tends to dishonour Christ, and destroy true religion,

we must also declare that all dependence for justification on good works, whether real or supposed, is as fatal to those who persist in it. While we are zealous for good works, let us be careful not to put them in the place of Christ's righteousness, and not to advance any thing which may betray others into so dreadful a delusion.

9. See Dent. 13. 1—5. This is a most important declaration, when we consider how men are often misled by powerful talents, and high sounding claims to inspiration or supernatural powers.

Ver. 10—14. In preaching the gospel, the apostle sought to bring persons to the obedience, not of men, but of God. And as this was the great end he was pursuing, so he did not seek to please men. He did not, in his doctrine, accommodate himself to the humours of persons, either to gain their affection, or to avoid their resentment; but his great care was to approve himself to God. The Judaizing teachers, by whom these churches were corrupted, discovered a very different temper; they mixed works with faith, and the law with the gospel, to please the Jews, that they might escape persecution. But Paul would not attempt to alter the doctrine of Christ, either to gain their favour, or to avoid their fury. And he gives this very good reason; that, if he yet pleased men, he should not be the servant of Christ. He knew that no man could serve two such masters; therefore, though he would not needlessly displease any, yet he dares not allow himself to gratify men, at the expense of his faithfulness to Christ. Thus, from the sincerity of his aim and intention in the discharge of his office, he proves that he was truly an apostle of Christ. And in so important a matter we must not fear the frowns of men, nor seek their favour, by using words of men's wisdom.

Concerning the manner wherein he received the gospel, he had it not by information from others, but by revelation from Heaven. One thing peculiar in the character of an apostle, was, that he had been called to, and instructed for this office, immediately by Christ himself. And in this St. Paul shows, that he was by no means defective. The gospel he preached was by immediate inspiration, or revelation from Christ himself. He had been brought up in the Jewish religion, and had been

exceedingly zealous of the traditions invented by their fathers, and conveyed down from one generation to another; so that he not only rejected the christian religion, notwithstanding the many proofs of its Divine origin, but he had been a persecutor. This Paul often notices, to magnify that free and rich grace, which wrought so wonderful a change in him. From hence it would appear, that he was not led to christianity, as many are, merely by education; and it must be something very extraordinary, which brought him not only to profess, but to preach the doctrine he had so vehemently opposed.

The conduct of many eminent christians and ministers once was contrary to the truth and the grace of the gospel, but when the Lord calls them by his grace, and reveals the glory and value of Christ to their souls, their enmity is subdued, their lusts dethroned, their hearts changed, and they willingly devote themselves to his service. If his command is concerned, they will renounce all worldly prospects, and venture all consequences for his sake.

10. "For am I now seeking the favour of men, or of God? or am I aiming to please men?" — *Scholefield.*

13 The religion practised among the jews at that time, including their traditions, not as originally taught by Moses.

Ver. 15—24. St. Paul states how wonderfully he was turned from the error of his ways, brought to the knowledge and faith of Christ, and appointed to the office of an apostle, ver. 15, 16. God separated him hereunto; the change wrought in him, was in pursuance of the Divine purpose whereby he was appointed to be a christian and an apostle, before he came into the world. All who are savingly converted are called by the grace of God; their conversion is the result of his good pleasure, and is effected by his power and grace in them. But the case of Paul was peculiar, both in the suddenness and in the greatness of the change wrought in him, and also in the manner wherein it was effected, by Christ's personal appearance to him, and immediate operation upon him. It will but little avail us to have Christ revealed to us, if he is not also revealed in us. It pleased God to bring him to the knowledge of Christ and his gospel, by special and immediate revelation; not only that he should embrace Christ

himself, but preach him to others; so that he was both a christian and an apostle by revelation.

When God calls us by his grace, we must not consult flesh and blood. St. Paul did not consult men for advice and direction; neither did he go up to Jerusalem, to those that were apostles before him, as though he needed to be approved by them, or to receive instructions or authority from them; but he went into Arabia, as a retirement proper for receiving Divine revelations, or to preach the gospel there. He returned to Damascus, where he had first begun his ministry, and from thence he with difficulty escaped his enemies, Acts 9. It was not till three years after his conversion that he went up to Jerusalem to see Peter; nor, while he was there, did he see any other apostle but James, the Lord's brother. This account being of importance, to remove the impressions the Galatians received to his prejudice, he confirms it by declaring, as in the presence of God, that what he had said was strictly true.

A revelation of the facts and doctrines of christianity, immediately from Christ himself, without the assistance of any human teacher, so wonderfully agreeing with all that Christ had taught on earth, was so extraordinary an event, and so important to those whom St. Paul visited and wrote, that we cannot wonder it is asserted so solemnly.—(80)

After this he came into Syria and Cilicia; having made a short visit to Peter, he returned to his work again. He had no communication at that time with the churches of Christ in Judea; but they having heard that he who persecuted them in times past, now preached the faith which he once destroyed, thanksgivings were rendered by many unto God; the report of this mighty change in him, filled them with joy, and excited them to give glory to God.

And what matter of thanksgiving and joy is it to the churches of Christ, when they hear of such monuments being raised to the praise of the glory of his grace, whether they have ever seen them or not! They glorify God for his power and mercy in saving such persons, and for all the service to his people and cause that is done, and may be further hoped for, by them.—(82.)

17. The journey into Arabia being mentioned here, and not in the Acts, shows that there existed no correspondence between the respective writers; while the term "many days," used, Acts 9 23, expresses a period which may here include three years, as it does, 1 Kings 2. 88, 39. But this epistle exhibits many coincidences with the Acts; as the apostle's zeal for the jews' religion, his persecuting the christians, his journey to Damascus, his journey after his first visit to Jerusalem, his residence at Antioch, the residence of some of the apostles at Jerusalem. The clear circumstantial knowledge of St. Paul's visit to Jerusalem also is observable.—See *Paley*.

We also learn from hence that the agreement between the doctrines set forth by St. Paul, and those of the other apostles, did not arise from personal communications between them, but from their being derived from the same source, the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

18. The reference to this visit in Acts 22, shows that St. Paul's visit to Jerusalem was of short duration.—See ver. 18.—*Paley*.

CHAPTER II.

The apostle further proves the Divine authority of his doctrine and mission, by James, Peter, and John's owning him and Barnabas, as apostles of the gentiles, and receiving Titus, a greek, into their christian communion, without his being circumcised, ver. 1—10. Gives an account of another interview with Peter at Antioch, where he publicly opposed him for judaizing, 11—14. And takes occasion from thence to enter upon his main point, relating to justification by faith in Christ without the works of the law, 15—21.

Ver. 1—10. From the first preaching of christianity, there were differences between the christians who had been jews, and those who had been gentiles. Many who had been jews, retained a regard to the ceremonial law; but those who had first been gentiles, had no regard to the law of Moses. St. Paul tells of another journey to Jerusalem, and what passed between him and the apostles there. It was not till fourteen years after his conversion. It was some evidence that he had no dependence upon the other apostles, that he had been so long absent from them, preaching christianity. He went with Barnabas, and took Titus also. Though Titus was now a convert to the christian faith, and a preacher, yet he was by birth a gentile, and uncircumcised: therefore, by St. Paul's making him his companion, it appeared that his doctrine and practice were consistent. The reason of it was, he went up by reve-

lation. This apostle was often favoured to be specially under Divine conduct in his motions and undertakings; and though we have no reason to expect this, yet we should endeavour to see our way made plain, and to commit ourselves to the guidance of Providence.

Observe, 1. His faithfulness in giving a full account of the doctrine he had preached among the gentiles, and was still resolved to preach—that of christianity, free from all mixtures of judaism. This doctrine he knew would be ungrateful to many there, yet he was not afraid to own it. Yet, 2. He chose rather to do it in private than public, and to the apostles themselves, or the chief among the jewish christians, rather than openly to all; because at Jerusalem, there were multitudes who believed, and yet continued zealous for the law, Acts 21. 20. His caution was, lest the success of his past labours should be lessened, or his future usefulness be obstructed. While we simply depend upon God for success to our labours, we should use every prudent precaution, to remove misapprehensions, and to counteract the designs of opposers.

In his practice he firmly adhered to the doctrine he had preached; therefore, though he had Titus with him, who was a greek, yet he would not suffer him to be circumcised, because he would not betray the doctrine of Christ, as he had preached it to the gentiles. But false brethren were unawares brought into their company, to see whether Paul would defend that freedom from the ceremonial law, which he had taught as the doctrine of the gospel, and represented as the privilege of those who embraced the christian religion. They designed to bring them into bondage, which they would have effected, had they prevailed with Paul and the other apostles to have circumcised Titus. They would then have imposed circumcision upon other gentiles, and so have brought them under the bondage of the law of Moses. But Paul would by no means yield to them; not in this one single instance; and the reason was, that the truth of the gospel might continue with the gentile christians pure, not corrupted with the mixtures of judaism, as it would have been had he yielded. Circumcision in some cases might be complied with without sin;

and accordingly we find Paul giving way, in the case of Timothy, Acts 16. 3. But when insisted on as necessary, and his consenting was likely to countenance such an imposition, he would not yield to those who were for the mosaic rites and ceremonies, but would stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free. There are things which, under some circumstances, may lawfully be complied with, yet, when they cannot be done without betraying the truth, or giving up the liberty of the gospel, they ought to be refused. We must not give place to *any* conduct, whereby the truth of the gospel would be obscured.

Though Paul conversed with the other apostles, yet he did not receive any addition to his knowledge, or authority from them, ver. 6. By those who seemed to be somewhat, he means particularly James, Peter, and John. They were justly looked upon as pillars of the church, not only for its ornament, but for its support. On some accounts they might seem to have the advantage, in that they had seen Christ in the flesh, which he had not; and were apostles before him, even while he continued a persecutor; but this was no prejudice to his being equally an apostle with them; all the servants are as nothing in comparison of their common Lord. As God had called them to this office, so he could qualify others for it, and employ them in it. It was evident in this case that he had done so; for they told him nothing but what he before knew by revelation, from whence it appeared he was not inferior to them, but was as much called and qualified to be an apostle as themselves. The issue was, that the other apostles were convinced of his Divine mission and authority, and acknowledged him as their fellow-apostle, ver. 7—10. They were not only satisfied with his doctrine, but they saw the Divine power attending him, both in preaching and in working miracles. And from hence they justly concluded, that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed to Paul, as the gospel of the circumcision was to Peter. Therefore, perceiving the grace that was given to him, that he was designed to the honour and office of an apostle as well as themselves, they gave unto him and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship, whereby they ac-

knowledge their equality, and agreed that these should go to the heathen, while they continued to preach to the jews; judging it agreeable to the mind of Christ, so to divide their work.

Here we learn that the gospel is not ours, but God's; and that men are but the keepers of it; for this we are to praise God. Also that the ministers of the word are to keep and maintain the truth of it, with all faithfulness and good conscience, and further, to apply it to the best use, and the greatest good of man. For this charge lies upon those who are put in trust. Again, that the gospel is a special treasure; for this we are to yield thankfulness to God, by bringing forth its fruits. In this duty most come short, and therefore we may justly fear lest God should take from us the gospel of life.—(56)

Thus the meeting ended in harmony; they approved Paul's doctrine and conduct, were fully satisfied in him, embraced him as an apostle of Christ, and had nothing further to add, only that he would remember the poor. The christians of Judea were at that time labouring under great wants and difficulties; and the apostles, out of compassion and concern for them, recommended their case to Paul. This was a reasonable request; for if the gentiles were made partakers of their spiritual things, it was their duty to minister to them in carnal things, as Rom. 15. 27. And by his ready compliance he showed his charitable disposition: how ready he was to own the jewish converts as brethren, though many would scarcely allow the like favour to the converted gentiles; but mere difference of opinion was no reason with Paul, why he should not relieve and help them. Herein is an excellent pattern of christian charity, and that we should by no means confine it to those of the same sentiments with ourselves, but be ready to extend it to all we look upon as the disciples of Christ.

1. It is generally considered that the visit to Jerusalem here mentioned is that recorded, Acts 15, but *Paley* thinks that it took place during the long time Paul and Barnabas abode at Antioch, Acts 14. 28. *Greswell* considers it is the visit mentioned, Acts 18. 22. The particular reasons for these calculations cannot be gone into here, they deserve attention, and appear decisive against the general opinion.

2. Paul sought the approval of his doctrine by Peter and the other apostles, not because it was uncertain and unprofitable till that was

done, but because it was slandered, and the slander was that he taught otherwise than Peter did.—*Perkins*.

3, 4. There was no need for Titus to be circumcised, but only that pretended necessity set up of the false brethren. *Doddridge* observes that this conduct of Paul, in not allowing Titus to be circumcised when it was insisted upon as necessary to salvation, is very consistent with what he did to promote it with regard to Timothy in different circumstances, Acts 16. 3.

6 "Those high in reputation communicated nothing new to me"—*Schulzfeld*.

10. Hence it follows that the primacy of Peter, over the jews and gentiles, is supposititious, and thus the supremacy of the pope goes to the ground; for if he holds of Peter, and succeeds him in authority and office, as he pretends, he must challenge superiority over the jews, and has nothing to do with the gentiles.—*Perkins*.

Ver. 11—14. From the preceding account the Galatians might discern the falseness of what the enemies of St Paul insinuated, and their own folly and weakness in departing from the gospel he preached. But more fully to fortify them against the judaizing teachers, he acquaints them with another interview with the apostle Peter at Antioch, ver. 11—14. In this Paul finds himself obliged to oppose Peter, for he was to be blamed: a plain evidence that he was not inferior to him, and consequently shows the weakness of the pope's pretences to supremacy and infallibility, as the successor of Peter.

Here we may observe, Peter's fault. When he came among the gentile churches, he complied with them, and ate with them, although they were not circumcised; agreeably to the instructions given in particular to him, Acts 10. But when there came some Jewish Christians from Jerusalem, he became more shy of the gentiles, which doubtless caused great grief and discouragement. His fault herein had an ill influence upon others, for other jews, from his example, scrupled eating with the gentiles. Barnabas himself, one who had been instrumental in planting many churches of the gentiles, was carried away with their dissimulation. Here note the weakness and inconstancy of the best of men, when left to themselves, and how apt they are to falter in their duty to God, out of undue regard to men; and the great force of bad examples, especially of such as are in reputation for wisdom and honour.

Notwithstanding Peter's character, yet, when Paul observes him thus acting

to the great prejudice both of the truth of the gospel and the peace of the church, he is not afraid to reprove him. Paul adhered resolutely to his principles, when others faltered. He was a hebrew of the hebrews, but he would magnify his office as the apostle of the gentiles, therefore would not see them discouraged. When he saw that Peter and the others did not live up to that principle which the gospel taught, and which they had professed, namely, That by the death of Christ the partition wall between jew and gentile was taken down, and the observance of the law of Moses was no longer in force; as Peter's offence was public, he publicly reproved him for it. If thou, being a jew, livest after the manner of the gentiles, and not as do the jews, why compellest thou the gentiles to live as do the jews? Not indeed by open force and violence, but this was the tendency of what he did; it was in effect to signify that the gentiles must comply with the jews, or else not be admitted into christian communion.

All disguise or dissimulation is unworthy of a religion which has for its foundation the incarnate Truth, and to which that is every thing. There is great difference between the prudent condescension of St. Paul, who bears with, and uses for a time the legal ceremonies, as not sinful, and the timorous indirect conduct of St. Peter, who, by withdrawing from the gentiles, gives occasion to uphold those ceremonies as necessary.—(94.)

14 Considerable difference of opinion exists whether the apostle's address to Peter ends with this verse, or is carried forward, and if so, where it ends. Many think it is continued to the end of the chapter, which seems most probable, or it not, that it cannot terminate till ver. 17. The decision of the question, however, is of no importance. The passage plainly sets forth the principal argument of this epistle, that man is not justified by the works of the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ.—*Bloomfield*.

Ver. 15—19. Paul, having thus shown he was not inferior to any apostle, not to Peter himself, speaks of the great fundamental doctrine of the gospel, that justification is only by faith in Christ, and not by the works of the law—which condemned Peter for symbolizing with the jews. This was the doctrine that Paul preached among the Galatians, and which it is his great

business in this epistle to confirm. Concerning this, observe the practice of the jewish christians; Even we who have been born and bred in the jewish religion, not among the gentiles, have thought it necessary to seek justification by the faith of Christ, why then should we entangle ourselves with the law? For what did we believe in Christ? Was it not that we might be justified by the faith of Christ? If so, is it not folly to go back to the law, and to expect to be justified by the merit of moral works, or the influence of ceremonial sacrifices or purifications? If it would be wrong in jews by nature to return to the law, and expect justification by it, would it not be much more so to require this of the gentiles, who were never subject to it, since by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified? ver. 16. Why then should Peter and other jewish converts draw the attention of the gentiles to the ceremonies of the law, and intimate that they were not fully brought into the church of Christ, because they did not submit to them; when this served to sanction the teachers, who instructed them to depend upon the law, in part at least, for justification? The occasion of this declaration doubtless was taken from the ceremonial law; but the argument is quite as conclusive against all dependence upon the works of the moral law, as respects justification, being wholly inconsistent with the gospel method of justification.

To give the greater weight to this, is added, ver. 17, But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is Christ the minister of sin? This would be very dishonourable to Christ, and very injurious to them also. For if I build again the things which I destroyed; if I, or any other, who taught that the observance of the mosaic law is not necessary to justification, should now, by word or practice, teach or intimate that it is necessary, I make myself a transgressor. I own myself still to remain under the guilt of sin, notwithstanding my faith in Christ; or I shall be liable to be charged with deceit and prevarication, and acting inconsistently with myself. Thus does the apostle argue for the great doctrine of justification by faith without the works of the law, from the principles and

practice of the jewish christians themselves, and from the consequences that would attend departure from it; whence it appeared, that Peter and the other jews were much in the wrong for refusing to communicate with the gentile christians, and endeavouring to bring them under the bondage of the law.

Whether this is Paul's address to Peter or not, the doctrine is the same. If, while the apostles or jewish converts renounced their legal confidence, and sought to be justified by Christ, it should at length be found that they were yet in their sins, through the insufficiency of his righteousness and atonement to justify them, unless they returned to the law, it would follow that Christ was the minister of sin; and that the gospel was the ministration of condemnation, instead of the ministration of the Spirit and of righteousness. But let not such things be spoken of Christ and his gospel.

This was very different from the apostle's own experience in this matter; for though his knowledge of the strictness, extent, spirituality, and excellence of the moral law, as well as the typical import of the ceremonies, he was become dead to the law. By considering the law itself, he saw that justification was not to be expected by the works of it, and that there was now no further need of the sacrifices and purifications of it, since they were done away in Christ, by his offering up himself a sacrifice for us. Therefore the more he looked into it, the more he saw that there was no occasion for keeping up that regard to it, for which the jews pleaded. He expected no help from it in the matter of justification; he was divorced from it as a legal covenant, that he might be united to Christ by faith. The union between him and the law, in this sense, was finally dissolved, as the marriage covenant is ended by death. He hoped and feared nothing from it, any more than a dead man from his enemies. But the effect of this was not a careless, lawless life. It was necessary, that he might live to God, and be devoted to him through the motives and grace of the gospel. We make Christ the minister of sin, if we suppose his merits insufficient to justify the believer, or allow ourselves in disobedience, from presumptuous confidence

of being justified by his righteousness, and saved, without being sanctified.

It is no new prejudice, though a most unjust one, whereby the doctrine of justification by faith alone, and not by works, has been unjustly loaded, that of its own nature, it tends to foster people in sin. But to take occasion from free grace, or the doctrine of it, to live in sin, is as much as in us lies to make Christ the minister of sin, therefore all christian hearts should shudder at it and abominate it. And Paul rejects the mere thought as blasphemous and absurd, by a denial joined with a detestation of the thing denied.—(79. f)

15. "Sinners of the gentiles." The word in scripture phrase signifies a great and habitual sinner; and because the gentiles were still esteemed such by the Jewish nation, and generally were so, therefore the word is used to denote the gentiles who knew not God.—*Worthy.*

16. *Schulfield* shows that the phrase rendered "but," is here used not as one of limitation, but of exclusion, agreeably to the authorized english version.

Ver. 20, 21. The apostle was crucified with Christ. The demands of the law had been answered by his Surety, upon the cross. His union with Christ had made him die to all legal dependences, also to the love and friendship of the world, the delights and interests of sin, and all those carnal principles from which he formerly acted. Christ now lived in him by his Spirit, and his power, love, and grace, regulating his judgment and affections, transforming him into his own image, and employing him as the instrument of his glory. So that the life he now lived in the body, was not conducted upon carnal principles, or by a regard to outward things, but by faith in the Son of God; as he depended upon him for all, and aimed to do all, according to his will, and in subservience to his glory. To this he was influenced by the consideration that this glorious Saviour loved him when a bitter persecutor, and had given himself a sacrifice for his sins. Here, in his own person, the apostle describes the mysterious life of a believer. 1. He is crucified, yet he lives; the old man is crucified. Rom. 6. 6, but the new man is living. He is dead unto the world, and dead to the law, yet he is alive unto God and Christ; sin is mortified, and grace is quickened. 2. He lives, and yet not he;

he lives in the exercise of grace; he has the comforts and the triumphs of grace; and yet that grace is not from himself, but from another. Believers see themselves living in a state of dependence. 3. He is crucified with Christ, and yet Christ lives in him; this results from his mystical union with Christ, by means of which he is interested in the death of Christ, so as by virtue of that to die unto self; and yet interested in the life of Christ, so as by virtue of that to live unto God. 4. He lives in the flesh, and yet lives by faith; to outward appearance he lives as other people do, his natural life is supported as others are; yet he has a higher and nobler principle which supports and actuates him, that of faith in Christ, and especially as beholding the wonders of his love in giving himself for him. Hence it is, that though he lives in the flesh, yet he does not live after the flesh. Those who have true faith, live by that faith; and the great thing which faith fastens upon, is, Christ's loving us, and giving himself for us. The great evidence of Christ's loving us, is, that he gave himself for us; and with this we are chiefly concerned to unite faith, in order to our living to him.

He loved me, and gave himself for me, ver. 20. As if the apostle said, The Lord saw me to be nothing else but wicked, going astray, contemning God, and flying from him more and more; yea, rebelling against God, taken, led and carried away captive of the devil. Thus, of his mere mercy, going before my reason, my will, and my understanding, he loved me; and so loved me, that he gave himself for me, to the end that I might be freed from the law, sin, the devil, and death. Such wickedness, error, darkness, and ignorance was in my will and understanding, that it was impossible for me to be ransomed by any other means than by such an inestimable price. Why then do we vaunt of the integrity and soundness of nature, of the rule of reason, of free-will, and of doing what lieth in us? Why, to pacify the consuming wrath of God, do I offer this my rotten stubble and straw, yea my sins, and clamor of him to reward me with grace and everlasting life for them, since here I learn that such wickedness is lurking in my nature, that the whole world, and all the creatures

therein, were not able to countervail the indignation of God, but that the very Son of God himself must needs be delivered for the same? Let us consider well this price, let us behold this captive delivered, as Paul saith, "for me," and we shall see that the Son of God is excellency beyond all comparison.—(58.)

And though the apostle neglected no acceptable obedience, and declined no self-denying service, yet he did all his duties from such principles and for such purposes, as not to make of no effect, or to set aside the grace of God, by attempting to justify himself by his works, being fully assured that if righteousness could have been obtained by man's obedience to the law, consistently with the glory of God, then there had been no necessity for Christ's death, and it had been to no purpose. But as this wondrous event could not have taken place without occasion for it, so it must be concluded that righteousness could not be obtained by a sinner on account of his obedience to the law.

Here we are to notice the false faith of many. They can be content to believe that Christ was crucified for them; but there they stop, for they do not believe they were crucified with Christ. Their faith, therefore, is a false faith, and their profession is accordingly. For they have the form of godliness without the power of it. They think they believe the articles of faith aright, but they are deceived. For to believe in Christ crucified, is not only to believe that he was crucified, but also to believe that I am crucified with him. And this is to know Christ crucified. But Paul says he does not abrogate the grace of God; and why? because he will suffer nothing in the cause of our justification to be joined with the obedience of the death of Christ. Hence we learn what is the nature of grace. It must stand wholly and entirely in itself. God's grace cannot stand with man's merit. Grace is no grace unless it is freely given every way, Rom. 4. 5; 11. 6. Grace and works of grace, in causing justification, can no more stand together than fire and water. By this we are admonished to be nothing in ourselves, and to ascribe all we are or can do, to the grace of God.—(56.)

The more simply the believer relies on Christ for every thing, the more de-

votedly does he walk before Him in all his ordinances and commandments. Christ lives and reigns in him, and he lives here on earth by faith in the Son of God, which works by love, induces obedience, and effects a progressive transformation into his holy image. This enables the believer to use the language of holy confidence, and to say, "He loved me, and gave himself for me." Thus he neither abuses nor frustrates the grace of God.

20. It is evident from Col. 2. 14, that the debt which believers owed, was paid, and cancelled, and taken out of the way, and nailed to his cross, the very moment Jesus died. So that they may be said to be "crucified," and have atoned for their sins in Christ. "Nevertheless he lived," in a new and evangelical hope and faith; or rather, it was not so much he that lived, as "Christ who lived in him," by the influence of his Spirit, by his power and grace.—*Falpy.*

CHAPTER III.

The apostle reproves, and warmly expostulates with the Galatians for their folly in departing from the great doctrine of justification alone, through faith in Christ, ver. 1—5. Establishes this doctrine from the example of Abraham's justification, 6—9. From the tenour of the law and severity of its curse, from which believers are redeemed by Christ, that they might be blessed with Abraham, 10—14. From the stability of the covenant of promises made with him, which the law could not disannul, and from the inconsistency of justification by the free promise and by the law, 15—18. He nevertheless shows that the law had its use, as it was given to sinners to convince them of their need of a Saviour, and was a schoolmaster to lead them to Christ, 19—25. And that under the gospel state true believers are, without distinction of nations, or of external circumstances, all one in Christ, and heirs of Abraham's blessings, 26—29.

Ver. 1—5. Having shown the authority for his ministry and doctrine, by a statement of facts, the apostle proceeds to reprove the Galatians, as destitute of wisdom and understanding, in thus turning away from the truth as it is in Christ. He represents them as enchanted by the arts and snares of their seducing teachers, so deluded as to act very unlike themselves. Their folly and infatuation appeared in that they did not adhere to the gospel way of justification, wherein they had been taught, and which they had professed to embrace. It is not enough to know the

truth, and to say we believe it, but we must obey it, and stedfastly abide by it. Several things proved and aggravated the folly of these christians. Jesus Christ had been evidently set forth as crucified among them; they had the doctrine of the cross preached to them, and the Lord's supper administered among them, in both which Christ crucified had been set forth.

He would ask, ver. 2, whether they were made partakers of the Holy Spirit—with which many were endued in his miraculous gifts, and it was to be hoped in his graces also—by the ministration of the law, or on account of any works performed by them in obedience to that ministration of death and condemnation. On the contrary, was it not by their hearing and embracing the doctrine of faith in Christ alone for justification? Which of these had God owned with such remarkable tokens of his favour and acceptance? They must acknowledge that it was not by the first, but by the last of these dispensations.—(82.)

And they must be very unwise, who suffer themselves to be turned away from the ministry and doctrine which have been blessed to their spiritual advantage. He calls upon them to consider their past and present conduct, and from thence to judge whether they were not acting in a very weak and foolish manner, ver. 3, 4. They had embraced the doctrine of the gospel, by means of which they had received the Spirit, and wherein only the true way of justification is revealed. Thus they had begun well: but now they were turning to the law, and expected to be advanced to higher degrees of perfection, by adding the observances of it to faith in Christ, in order to their justification, which could end in nothing but disappointment. While they sought to be justified in this way, they were so far from being more perfect christians, that they were in danger of becoming no christians at all; hereby they were undoing what they had hitherto done. And he further puts them in mind, that they had not only embraced the christian doctrine, but suffered for it also, therefore their folly would be the more aggravated, if now they should desert it. In this case all they had suffered would be in vain, it would appear that they had been foolish in suffering for what they now

deserted, and their sufferings would be of no advantage to them, if they renounced the grace of the gospel, to rely, though in part, on legal observances. They had ministers among them, who came with the divine seal and commission; for they had ministered the Spirit to them, and wrought miracle among them; and he appeals to them, whether they did it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?—Whether the doctrine preached by these ministers, and confirmed by the miraculous gifts and operations of the Spirit, was that of justification by the works of the law, or by the faith of Christ? They very well knew that it was not the former, but the latter; therefore must be inexcusable in forsaking a doctrine so signally owned and attested, for one that had received no such attestations. The repeating of the questions shows how important the apostle deemed the mistake into which the Galatians had fallen. Submission to the ceremonial law, though burdensome, would not have been renouncing the gospel, had it not implied dependence on their own works instead of Christ's merits; and this dependence could not consist with the grace of the gospel, even when the obedience itself is necessary from other motives and for other purposes.

Alas, that men's minds should be so infatuated and bewitched, that they should so generally turn away from the all-important doctrine of a Christ crucified, to listen to metaphysical subtleties, moral harangues, or wild reveries! The god of this world, by various instruments, who mutually despise each other, has blinded men's eyes, lest the gospel of the glory of Christ should shine into them, and they should learn to trust in a crucified Saviour. We cannot boast of the gifts of the Spirit, but we may boldly demand where the fruits of the Holy Spirit are most evidently brought forth? whether among those who preach justification by the works of the law, or those who preach the doctrine of faith?

1. Foolish. It implies levity and inconstancy rather than stupidity. Bewitched, fascinated—for deluded, led into error.

Ver. 6—14. The apostle having reproved the Galatians for their not obeying the truth, proceeds to prove the doctrine he had censured them for rejecting;

namely, that of justification by faith without the works of the law. This he does from the example of Abraham, who believed God, and that was accounted to him for righteousness, ver. 6. His faith fastened upon the word and promise of God, and upon his believing, he was owned and accepted of God as a righteous man. On this account he is represented as the father of the faithful, and the apostle states that they who are of faith, are the children of Abraham, ver. 7, not according to the flesh, but according to the promise; consequently, that they are justified in the same way. Abraham was justified by faith, and so are they. To confirm this, the apostle states that the promise made to Abraham, Gen. 12. 3, In thee shall all nations be blessed, had reference herunto, ver. 8. The scripture is said to foresee, because the Holy Spirit that indited the scripture did foresee. God would justify the heathen world in the way of faith; and therefore in Abraham, that is, in the seed of Abraham, which is Christ, not the jews only, but the gentiles also, should be blessed; not only blessed in the seed of Abraham, but blessed as Abraham, being justified as he was.

This the apostle calls preaching the gospel to Abraham; and from thence infers, ver. 9, that they who are of faith, that is, true believers, of what nation soever they are, are blessed with faithful Abraham. They are blessed with Abraham, the father of the faithful, by the promise made to him, therefore by faith, as he was blessed. Through faith in the promise of God he was blessed, and it is only in the same way others obtain this privilege. Let us then study the object, nature, and effects of Abraham's faith; for who can in any other way escape the curse of the holy law?

Here is shown that we cannot be justified but by faith fastening on the gospel; for as many as are of the works of the law, are under the curse. Those who depend upon the merit of their own works as their righteousness, who insist upon their own justification, must be condemned; for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them, ver. 10, and Deut. 27. 26. The condition of life, by the law, is, perfect, personal, and perpetual obedience: and for every failure the law

denounces a curse: if in any instance, at any time, we fail and come short, we fall under the curse of the law. The curse is against all sinners, therefore against all men; for all have sinned, and are become guilty before God: and if, as transgressors of the law, we are under its curse, it must be vain to look for justification by it.

To prove that justification is by faith, and not by the works of the law, the apostle alleges the express testimony of the Old Testament, ver. 11. The place referred to is Habak. 2. 4, where it is said, The just shall live by faith; it is also quoted, Rom. 1. 17. and Heb. 10. 38. It shows that those only are just or righteous, who truly live, who are freed from death and wrath, and restored into a state of life in the favour of God: and it is only through faith that persons become righteous, and as such are accepted of God, enabled to live to him now, and to obtain eternal life in the enjoyment of him hereafter. Hence the apostle says, It is evident that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God. It says nothing concerning faith in the matter of justification, nor does it give life to those who believe; but the language of it is, The man that doeth them, shall live in them, as Lev. 18. 5. It requires perfect obedience as the condition of life, and therefore can by no means be the rule of our justification. Thus we see that justification by faith is no new doctrine, but was established and taught in the church of God, long before the times of the gospel. It is, in truth, the only way wherein any sinners ever were, or can be justified.

For though deliverance is not to be expected from the law, yet there is a way open to escape this curse, and regain the favour of God, namely, through faith in Christ, who hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, ver. 13. Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law, by his being himself made a curse for us; being made sin for us, he was made a curse for us; not separated from God, but laid for a time under that token of the Divine displeasure, upon which the law of Moses put a particular brand, Deut. 21. 23. This was, that the blessing of Abraham might come on the gentiles through Jesus Christ; that all who believed on Christ, whether jews or gentiles, might become heirs of

Abraham's blessing, particularly of that great promise of the Spirit, reserved for the times of the gospel, ver. 14.

Hence it appeared, that it was not by putting themselves under the law, but by faith in Christ, that they became the people of God and heirs of the promise. Note the misery into which as sinners we are sunk; we are under the curse and condemnation of the law. Also observe the love and grace of our Lord Jesus Christ towards us; he has submitted to be made a curse for us, that he might redeem us from the curse of the law. See also the happy prospect we now have, through him, not only of escaping the curse, but of inheriting the blessing. And that it is only through faith in him we can hope to obtain this favour. The heavy sufferings of the Son of God more loudly warn sinners to flee from the wrath to come, than all the terrors of Sinai, or the curses of the law; for how can it be expected that God will spare any man who remains under sin, seeing that he spared not his own Son, when our sins were charged upon him? Yet at the same time, Christ, as from the cross, most freely invites sinners to take refuge in him.

10. This is a quotation from Deut. 27, 26, not in the very words, but the sense. It differed from the other curses pronounced from mount Ebal, as it was denounced, not against particular transgressors, but against every one who continued not in all things written in the law to do them. This was to teach Israel the necessity of seeking pardon as the free gift of God, and was fitted to keep their minds alive to the promise of the Messiah, in whom God had engaged to bless men.—*Davidson*.

Ver. 15—18. The apostle urges the stability of the covenant God made with Abraham, which was not disannulled by the giving the law to Moses, ver. 15, &c. Faith had the precedence of the law, for Abraham was justified by faith. He built upon a promise, and promises are proper objects of faith. God entered into covenant with Abraham, ver. 8, and this covenant was firm; even men's covenants are so, therefore much more God's. The covenant is made with Abraham and his Seed. The Lord did not include all the descendants of Abraham in his promises. The singular number alone is used, as implying that Christ is primarily meant, and the others only as related to him, and regarded as one with him. So that the covenant is still

in force; Christ abideth for ever in his person, and his spiritual seed, who are his by faith.

By this we learn the difference between the promises of the law and those of the gospel. The promises of the law are directed and made to the person of every man particularly; the promises of the gospel are first directed and made to Christ, and then by consequence to those who are by faith engrafted into Christ.—(56.)

And if it be objected, that the law which was given by Moses did disannul this covenant, because that insisted so much upon works, and there was so little in it of faith, or of the promised Messiah, he answers, that the subsequent law could not disannul the covenant or promise which went before, ver. 18. If the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise, but God gave it to Abraham by promise; therefore it would be inconsistent with his holiness, wisdom, and faithfulness, by any subsequent act to set aside the promise, and so alter the way of justification he had thus established. If the inheritance was given to Abraham by promise, and thereby entailed upon his spiritual seed, God would not retract that promise; he is not a man, that he should repent.

These two things, the law and the promise, must be carefully distinguished. They are near neighbours, as they are joined together in the soul, but as to their office, they ought to be separated far asunder, so that the law may have dominion over the flesh, and the promise may sweetly and comfortably reign in the conscience. Rightly to divide the word of truth, a great difference must be put between the promise and the law, as to the inward affections, and the whole practice of life. It is not for nothing that Paul pursues this argument so diligently. He foretaw in spirit, that this mischief should creep into the church, that the word of God would be confounded, that is, that the promise would be mingled with the law, and so be utterly lost. For when the promise is mingled with the law, it is made nothing else but the law. Let Christ be always before our eyes, as a sure summary of all arguments for the defence of faith, against the righteousness of the flesh, against the law, against works and merits.—(58.)

The argument as to the promise made

to Abraham and the other fathers, is of great efficacy for confirming the doctrine of justification by faith; which the apostle chiefly prosecutes, both here and in the epistle to the Romans. Here also he stands upon the word "Seed," applying the same to Christ. And he declares on the contrary what the law works, namely, that it holds men under the curse. Thus he fortifies the article of christian righteousness with strong arguments. On the other side, he overthrows the arguments of the false apostles, which they used in defence of the righteousness of the law, and turns them upon their own heads. As they contended that righteousness and life is obtained by the law, the apostle shows that it works nothing but the curse and death in us. The distinction is plain, that the law widely differs from the promise. Natural reason must confess that it is one thing to promise, and another thing to require; one thing to give, and another thing to take. The law requires and exacts of us our works; the promise of the Seed offers unto us the spiritual and everlasting benefits of God, and that freely for Christ's sake. Therefore we obtain the inheritance or blessing through the promise and not through the law. For the promise saith, In thy Seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed. The law therefore cannot justify, because the blessing is not joined unto it.—(58.)

16. Some difficulty has arisen respecting this passage, from not finding the word translated "seed," used in the Old Testament in a plural form, when referring to the posterity of men. *Slade* says, It is analogous to the english word progeny or offspring, which denotes, even in the singular number, all the descendants of different men, however numerous, but if we had occasion to speak of the descendants of different men, we should use the plural. He thinks that, in the case of Abraham, there was such a remarkable difference between the two lines of descendants which sprung from him, that if the Divine promise had extended to both, the apostle seems to intimate the plural would have been used.

There were not different seeds or progenies which should inherit the promise, one by the works of the law, the other by faith, for there was but one seed, which was Christ, and those who should claim in and under him by faith.—*Valpy*.

17. See note, Exod. 12. 40.

Ver. 19—22. The apostle having spoken of the promise made to Abraham, and represented that as the rule of our jus-

tification, and not the law, lest he should be thought to derogate from the law, and render it useless, he now proceeds to show the design and tendency of it, and for what purposes it was given. It might be asked, If that promise was sufficient for salvation, wherefore then serveth the law? Or why did God give the law by Moses? To this he answers, The law was added because of transgressions, ver. 19. It was not designed to establish a different way of justification from that settled by the promise; but it was added to it on purpose to be subservient to it, because of transgressions. The israelites, though chosen to be God's peculiar people, were sinners as well as others, therefore the law was given to convince them of their sin, and that they were under the Divine displeasure on the account of it; for by the law is the knowledge of sin, Rom. 3. 20, and the law entered, that sin might abound, Rom. 5. 20. It was also intended to restrain them from the commission of sin; and yet at the same time it was designed to direct them to the true and only way whereby sin was to be expiated, wherein they might obtain the pardon of it, namely, through the death and sacrifice of Christ, which was the special use for which the law of sacrifices and purifications was given.

The apostle adds, that the law was given for this purpose, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made; that is, till Christ should come. But when the Seed was come, and a fuller discovery of Divine grace in the promise was made, then the law, as given by Moses, was to cease; that covenant, being found faulty, was to give place to another and a better covenant, Heb. 8. 7, 8. And though the law is always in force, and still continues of use to convince men of sin, and to restrain them from it; yet we are now no longer under the bondage and terror of that legal covenant. The law was not intended to discover a way of justification, different from that revealed by the promise, but only to lead men to see their need of the promise, by showing them the sinfulness of sin, and to point them to Christ, through whom alone they could be pardoned and justified.

As a further proof that the law was not designed to make void the promise, the apostle adds, It was ordained by

angels in the hand of a mediator. It was given to different persons, and in a different manner from the promise, and therefore for different purposes. The promise was made to Abraham, and all his spiritual seed, including believers of all nations; but the law was given to the israelites as a peculiar people, and separated from the rest of the world. The promise was given immediately by God himself; the law was given by the ministry of angels, and the hand of a mediator. Hence the law could not be designed to set aside the promise.

For a mediator, as the very term signifies, is a friend that interposes between two parties, and is not to transact merely with and for one of them, to the exclusion of the other, ver. 20. But God, from whom the law was delivered to Israel, by the hand of Moses, is only one of the parties concerned in the promise to Abraham and his spiritual seed of all nations, gentiles as well as jews. Therefore, as gentile believers were included in that promise, and neither they, nor their representatives, were present at the making of the Sinai covenant, nor were concerned in it, as made only with the natural seed of Abraham, this transaction between God and the jews could not vacate the antecedent, free, and absolute promise, which extended likewise to the gentiles. And indeed he is one God, who justifies the circumcision by faith, and the uncircumcision through faith, and is unchangeably faithful to his word of promise, and to those that trust in him according to it.—(82.)

Moses was only a mediator between God and the israelites, not between God and the spiritual seed of Abraham; and therefore the law given by Moses, could not affect the promise made to them. This does not imply that Christ was not present as Jehovah, at the giving of the law, but that he was there as lawgiver, not as the Mediator representing the whole body of believers.

The apostle also states that the law was given, to convince men of the necessity for a Saviour. The law is by no means inconsistent with the promise, but subservient to it, as the design is to discover men's transgressions, and to show their need of a better righteousness than that of the law. If there had been a law given that could have given life, verily righteousness should have

been by the law; and in that case the promise would have been superseded. But this could not be; for the scripture declares that all, both jews and gentiles, are in a state of guilt, ver. 22, therefore unable to attain to righteousness and justification by the works of the law. That discovered their wounds, but could not afford a remedy: it showed they were guilty, because it appointed sacrifices and purifications, which yet were manifestly insufficient to take away sin. Therefore, the great design of it was, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe: that, being convinced of their guilt, and the insufficiency of the law to effect a righteousness for them, they might be persuaded to believe on Christ, and so obtain the benefit of the promise.

Was then the law contrary to the promises of God, and their fulfilment to those who lived under that dispensation? Such a thought was to be abhorred. It is impossible that the holy, just, and good law of God, the universal standard of duty, should be contrary to the gospel of Christ. It is every way intended to promote it.

20. This mediator, Moses, was only the mediator of the jews, and so was only the mediator of one party, to whom belonged the blessings of Abraham, ver. 8, 14. But God, who made the promise, that in one should all the families of the earth be blessed, is *one*; the God of the other party, the gentiles, as well as of the jews, seeing he is *one God*, who will justify the circumcision by faith, and the uncircumcision through faith.—*Whitby*.

Ver. 23—25. The apostle shows the state of the jews under the Mosaic economy. That before faith came, or before Christ appeared, and the doctrine of justification by faith in him was more fully discovered, they were kept under the law, and at that time they were shut up as prisoners in a state of confinement; even believers were comparatively in a state of darkness and bondage. Hereby they might be disposed more readily to embrace the faith which should afterwards be revealed; or be persuaded to accept Christ, and the better dispensation which he was to introduce, whereby they were to be freed from bondage and servitude, and brought into a state of greater light and liberty. In that state the law was their schoolmaster, to bring them to Christ, that they might be justified by faith, ver. 24.

As it declared the mind and will of God concerning them, and at the same time denounced a curse for every failure in their duty, so it convinced them of their lost and undone condition in themselves, and let them see the weakness and insufficiency of their own righteousness to recommend them to God. And as it obliged them to a variety of sacrifices and rites, which, though they could not of themselves take away sin, were typical of Christ, and of the great sacrifice which he was to offer up for the expiation of it, so it directed them to him as their only Relief and Refuge.

Thus the law did not teach the living, saving knowledge; but, by its rites and ceremonies, and especially by its sacrifices, it directed them to Christ, that they might be justified by faith.—(11.)

Thus it was their schoolmaster, to instruct and govern them in their state of minority, or, as the word *pedagogue* properly signifies, their servant, to lead and conduct them to Christ, as children are led to school by servants who have the care of them, that they might be more fully instructed by Him in the true way of justification and salvation, which is only by faith in Christ. But lest it should be said, If the law was of this use and service under the Jewish, why may it not continue to be so under the Christian state? the apostle adds, ver. 25, that after faith is come, and the gospel dispensation taken place, under which Christ, and the way of pardon and life through faith in him, are set in the clearest light, we are no longer under a schoolmaster; there is no such need of the law to direct as there was before. This plainly admits of being applied to the believer's experience, and the first use of the moral law generally, in bringing men to Christ. And it shows the superior advantage of the gospel state, under which we enjoy a clearer discovery of Divine grace and mercy than the Jews of old.

Most men continue shut up as in a dark dungeon, in love with their sins, being blinded and lulled asleep by Satan, through worldly pleasures, interests, and pursuits. But the awakened sinner discovers his dreadful condition, and that he cannot effect his own deliverance. Then he feels that the mercy and grace of God form his only hope. And the terrors of the law often are used by the

convincing Spirit, to show the sinner his need of Christ, to bring him to rely on his sufferings and merits, that he may be justified by faith. Then the law, by the teaching of the Holy Spirit, becomes his guide in the path of gospel obedience, his beloved rule of duty, and his standard for daily self-examination.* In this use of it he learns to depend more simply on the Saviour; it puts energy into his prayers, and endears the promises to his soul. We are not now treated as young children, but as sons grown up to a full age, who are admitted to greater freedom, and invested with larger privileges.

24. By the original word, *paidagogos*, is not meant a schoolmaster or teacher, but the person, usually a freed man or slave, who conducted children to and from school, (whence their appellation,) attended them out of school hours, formed their manners, superintended their moral conduct, and in various respects prepared them for the teacher.—*Bloomfield*. See *Schleusner*. *Newcome* says, The law was our conductor to Christ, by its doctrines, moral precepts, types, and prophecies; and by showing the difficulty of performing a law of works.

The law is a schoolmaster to Christ for two causes. 1. Because it points out, and shadows forth unto us, Christ, by bodily rudiments of ceremonies and sacrifices. 2. Because the law, especially the moral law, urges and compels men to go to Christ. For it shows us our sins, and that we are without remedy; it shows us the condemnation due unto us. By this means it makes us despair of salvation in respect of ourselves; and thus it compels us to seek for help, out of ourselves, in Christ.—*Perkins*.

Ver. 26—29. Having shown for what intent the law was given, we learn our privileges by Christ. The apostle particularly declares, 1. That we are the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus, ver. 26. And here we may observe the great privilege real Christians enjoy under the gospel; they are no longer accounted servants, but sons; not now kept at such a distance, and under such restraints, as the Jews were, but allowed nearer and more free access to God; admitted into the number, and having a right to all the privileges of his children. 2. They come to obtain this privilege by faith in Christ Jesus; having accepted him as their Lord and Saviour; and relying on him alone for justification and salvation, they are admitted into this happy relation to God; for he gave power to become the sons of God, to them that believe on his name, John 1. 12. And thus we become the children of God by faith in

Christ, and we put on Christ, and stand accepted in him. All who thus belong to him, and are one with him, are the children of Abraham, and heirs according to the promise. But no outward forms or profession can secure these blessings; for if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.

Faith in Christ, whereby they became the children of God, they professed in baptism. As many of you as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ. In our baptism we put on Christ; therein we profess discipleship to him, and engage to be his faithful servants; being baptized into Christ, we are baptized into his death, that as he died and rose again, so, in conformity thereunto, we should die unto sin, and walk in newness of life, Rom. 6. 3, 4. it would be a very great advantage to us, to remember this at all times and under all circumstances.

The putting on of Christ according to the gospel, consists not in imitation, but in a new birth and a new creation. That is to say, in putting on Christ's innocency, his righteousness, his wisdom, his power, his saving health, his life and his spirit. We are clothed with a mortal garment, a garment of sin, this corrupt and sinful nature which we received from Adam, and which Paul is wont to call the old man. This old man must be put off with all his works, that, of the children of Adam, we may be made the children of God. This is not done by changing a garment, or by any laws or works, but by a new birth and by the renewing of the inward man.—(58.)

This privilege of being the children of God, and by baptism devoted to Christ, is now enjoyed by all real christians. They are all one in Christ Jesus. As one is not accepted on the account of any national or personal advantages he may enjoy above the other, so neither is another rejected for want of them; but all who sincerely believe in Christ, are accepted of him, and become children of God through faith in him. Being Christ's, we are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. Judaizing teachers would make the Galatians believe that they must be circumcised and keep the law of Moses, or they could not be saved. No, says the apostle, there is no need of that; if ye be Christ's, if ye sincerely believe on him, who is the promised

Seed, in whom all the nations of the earth were to be blessed, ye thereby become the true seed of Abraham, the father of the faithful, and as such, are heirs according to the promise, and consequently are entitled to its great blessings and privileges.

Therefore, upon the whole, since it appeared that justification was not to be attained by the works of the law, but only by faith in Christ, and that the law of Moses was given for purposes only subservient to, and not subversive of the promise, and that now, under the gospel, christians enjoy much greater and better privileges than the jews did under that dispensation, it is evident that the Galatians were very unreasonable and unwise, in hearkening to those who endeavoured to deprive them both of the truth and liberty of the gospel.

He that hath made believers heirs will carefully provide for them. Therefore our care must be to do the duties that belong to us, and all other cares we must cast upon God. Those in this world, who are born to land and living, are content to live sparingly in the hope of future enlargement. And our special care must be for heaven; the things of this life are but trifles in comparison. The city of God in heaven, is the portion or child's part. Seek for the assurance of that above all things.—(56.)

28. There was strong reason for this distinct mention of female as well as male, since the distinction between the sexes among the jews, was very great, particularly in religious privileges.

CHAPTER IV.

The apostle proceeds to show the folly of returning to legal observances for justification, from the rich advantages that the believing jews were partakers of by the gospel dispensation, which brought them out of the state of bondage under the law, to which they, like children under age, had before been subject, ver. 1—7. And from the exceeding happy change that was made upon the gentile believers, by their conversion from idols to God, 8—11. He thereupon reasons with them all against following false teachers, from the great affection they had discovered towards himself and his ministry, and from the designing temper of those judaizers, who had crept in among them, 12—18. He expresses his own tender and earnest concern for them, 19, 20. And then, resuming his main argument, illustrates the difference between what is to be expected from the law, and from the

gospel, in a figurative representation of the children of promise, by Isaac, the son of Sarah, and of the children that were only after the flesh, by Ishmael, the son of Hagar, 21—31.

Ver. 1—7. The apostle deals plainly with those who urged the law of Moses together with the gospel of Christ, and endeavoured to bring believers under its bondage. He prosecutes the comparison of a child; and shows what great advantages arise from the gospel, above those of the law. The state of the Old Testament church was like a child under age, in comparison with the greater liberty enjoyed under the gospel. That was indeed a dispensation of grace, yet it was comparatively a dispensation of darkness; for as the heir, in his youth, is under tutors and governors till the time appointed of his father, by whom he is educated and instructed in the meaning of things of which at present he knows little, though afterward they are likely to be of great use to him; so it was with the Old Testament church. They could not fully understand the meaning of the Mosaic economy. And as that was a dispensation of darkness, so of bondage; for they were tied to many burdensome rites and observances, by which, as by first rudiments, they were taught and instructed, and kept in a state of subjection, like a child under tutors and governors. These observances are called the elements of this world; they taught the first principles of religious knowledge. But the sacrifices, festivals, and rites, when their typical meaning was neglected, in many respects agreed with the gross apprehensions of the world at large.

We learn the much happier state of Christians under the gospel dispensation, ver. 4—7. The Person employed to bring in this new dispensation, was the Son of God himself, the only Begotten of the Father; who, as he had been prophesied of, and promised, from the foundation of the world, in due time was manifested for this purpose. He who was truly God, for our sakes became man; and he who was Lord of all, consented to come into a state of subjection, and to take upon him the form of a servant. He had indeed something more and greater in view than to deliver from the bondage of the ceremonial law; for he

came in our nature, and consented to suffer and die for us, that he might redeem us from the wrath of God, and from the curse of the moral law, which as sinners, we all lay under. That was a mercy to be bestowed at the time of his manifestation. Then the more servile state of the church was to come to an end, and a better was appointed; for he was sent to redeem us, that we might no longer be accounted as servants, but as sons grown up to maturity. This the course of the apostle's argument seems to intend by this expression, though, no doubt, it may also be understood as signifying that gracious adoption of which the gospel so often speaks, as the privilege of believers in Christ. Israel was God's son, his first-born, Rom. 9. 4. But, under the gospel, particular believers receive the adoption: and, as an earnest and evidence, they have the Spirit of adoption, putting them upon the duty of prayer, and enabling them to look to God as a Father, ver. 6. This was the state both of Jewish and gentile converts, and God sent forth the Holy Spirit, as given through and by his Son, to quicken, seal, and comfort them as his beloved children, enabling and encouraging them to call upon him with filial love and confidence, as their Father, of whatsoever nation they were.

We read, ver. 7, Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ; that is—Now, under the gospel state, we are no longer under the servitude of the law, but, upon our believing in Christ, become the sons of God; we are thereupon accepted of him, and adopted by him; and, being the sons, we are also heirs of God, and are entitled to the heavenly inheritance, Rom. 8. 17. Therefore it must needs be the greatest weakness and folly to turn back to the law, and seek justification by the works of it. As therefore the apostle hoped this was the case with many Galatians, (for he addresses them individually,) so every such person was no longer a servant to worship and obey God from slavish fear, or mercenary hope, but a child of God, and an heir of heaven through Christ, to walk with him in filial reverence and confidence.

From what the apostle says in these verses, we may observe, 1. The wonders of Divine love and mercy towards us,

particularly of God the Father in sending his Son into the world to redeem and save us; of the Son of God in submitting so low, and suffering so much, for us, in pursuance of that design; and of the Holy Spirit, in condescending to dwell in the hearts of believers for such gracious purposes. 2. The invaluable advantages christians enjoy under the gospel. We, who by nature are children of wrath and disobedience, become by grace children of love. All who have the privilege of adoption, have the Spirit of adoption, are all received into the number, and partake of the nature of the children of God: for he will have all his children resemble him. The Spirit of adoption is always the Spirit of prayer, and it is our duty in prayer to look to God as a Father. Christ has taught us in prayer to regard God as our Father in heaven. If we are his sons, then his heirs. It is not so among men, with whom the eldest son is heir; but all God's children are heirs: all who have the nature of sons, shall have the inheritance of eldest sons. May this filial temper and conduct ever evince our adoption! and may the Holy Spirit witness with our spirits that we are children and heirs of God.

2. According to *Schreusner* the word rendered tutor, signifies the guardian appointed by law, governor, him appointed by the will. Guardians and managers — *Wakefield*. Tutors and stewards. — *Marcknight*.

3. The word used denotes figuratively the elements or rudiments of any kind of knowledge, what is intended to give way to the more complete knowledge of a further advanced period of study. However useful the law of Moses, on that of nature might be, each as introductory dispensations, more or less perfect, the obligation to both must cease when the more perfect religion of the gospel was promulgated, by which both were alike superseded. — *Bloomfield*.

4. 'Sent forth,' does not involve any necessary idea of a local change. It is abundantly plain that such expressions as this show that Christ had existence before he was born of a woman. — *J. P. Smith*, from *Sermler*.

5. Adopted children among the ancients shared the estate of the parent with the real children: they were called by the name of the person who adopted them, and were subjected to his power as fully as his own children.

6. *Selden* states that slaves were not allowed to use the title of Abba, when addressing the master of the family.

The 4, 5, 6, and 7th verses of this chapter contain the sum and marrow of christian divinity. — *A. Clarke*.

Ver. 8—11. In these verses the apostle reminded the Galatians what a blessed change their conversion had made upon them. Thence he endeavours to con-

vince them of their great weakness in hearkening to those who would bring them under the bondage of the law of Moses. He reminds them of their past state and behaviour as heathens, and what they were before the gospel was preached to them; then they knew not God, the way wherein he is to be worshipped; and at that time were employed in superstitious and idolatrous services to those who, though accounted gods, were but mere creatures, and perhaps of their own making, therefore utterly unable to hear and help them. Those who are ignorant of the true God, are inclined to false gods.

They are called upon to consider the happy change made in them by the gospel. Now they were brought to the knowledge of the true God, and of his Son Jesus Christ, recovered out of the ignorance and bondage under which they before lay; or rather were known of God. This happy change whereby they were turned from idols to the living God, and through Christ had received the adoption of sons, was the effect of his free and rich grace: they ought to account it such, and were laid under the greater obligation to adhere to the liberty wherewith he had made them free. All our acquaintance with God begins on his part; we know him, because we are known of him.

Though our religion teaches no idolatry, yet it is certain that many among us practise spiritual idolatry in their hearts. For what a man loves most, and cares most for, and delights most in, that is his god; some therefore have their riches for their god, some their pleasures, some their lusts. For where thy heart is, there is thy god. And many of the ignorant multitude worship a god of their own making: a god made all of mercy and no justice. For they persuade themselves that there is mercy with God, though they repent not, but go on in their sins. Again, as we know God, so we must remember him. Christ stands alone in the work of redemption, without partner or substitute, whether we regard the whole or any part. — (5b.)

Hence is inferred the absurdity of suffering themselves to be brought again into a state of bondage, ver. 9; How is it that ye, who have been acquainted with a dispensation of light, liberty, and love, that of the gospel, should submit to a

dispensation of darkness, bondage, and terror, that of the law? The Galatians never had been under the law of Moses, therefore were less excusable than the jews, who might have some fondness for that which had been of so long standing among them. Besides they suffered themselves to be brought into bondage to weak and beggarly elements, such things as had no power to cleanse the soul, or to afford any solid satisfaction to the mind; which were only designed for that state of pupillage under which the church had been, and which was now come to a period. Therefore their weakness and folly were the more aggravated, in submitting to them, and in symbolizing with the jews in observing their various festivals, here signified by days, and months, and times, and years. Here note, 1. It is possible for those who have made great professions of religion, to be afterward drawn into great defections from purity and simplicity. And, 2. The more mercy God has shown, in bringing any into acquaintance with the gospel, and the liberties and privileges of it, the greater their sin and folly, in suffering themselves to be deprived of them.

The apostle had been at great pains in preaching the gospel, and endeavouring to confirm them in the faith and liberty of it; but now they were rendering his labour among them fruitless and ineffectual, and with the thought of this he could not, but be deeply affected. The labour of ministers is vain upon those who begin in the Spirit, and end in the flesh; who, though they seem to set out well, yet afterwards turn aside from the way of the gospel. Those will have a great deal to answer for, upon whom the faithful ministers of Jesus Christ bestow labour in vain.

And it must teach all who are members of the visible church, to fear and to suspect themselves. We must not be content because we have some good things in ourselves, but we must labour to be sealed up to the day of our redemption, and to lay a good foundation against the time to come, 1 Tim. 6. 19, by seeking to have in us such things as are proper to the elect, as unfeigned faith in Christ, and conversion to God from all our sins. Observe also, Paul fears lest his labour is in vain, yet he still labours, and thus to do, whatsoever follows, is true wisdom

and the fear of God. For it is enough that the work we take in hand is pleasing to God. And though it be vain in respect of men, it is not so before God, Isa. 49. 4; 2 Cor. 2. 17. This every man must remember in his place and calling, for the establishing his mind against all events.—(56.)

10, 11. Compare with Rom. 14. 5, and observe that those among the Romans who regarded days, were converted jews, who, leaving from their youth observed them as divine appointments, were with difficulty brought to lay them aside. As their attachment had its origin from regard to divine authority, the gentile converts were enjoined to use forbearance towards them. But those among the Galatians who observed days, were converted gentiles, ch. 4. 8. who were led by the false teachers, to be subject to jewish ceremonies, and to consider these things as necessary to salvation, which subverted justification by faith in Christ. These circumstances explain the different language used by the apostle in each place.—*T. H. Horne. Fuller.* Some suppose that the apostle here refers to the jewish observance of the sabbatical year.

Ver. 12—18. The apostle desires the Galatians to lay aside all resentments, and that they would bear the same temper of mind toward him, which he did to them; and be of one mind with him respecting the law of Moses, as well as united with him in love. Though he had been zealous for the law as they had become, yet he now trusted only in Christ, and put no more confidence in the law than if he had been a gentile. He had expressed himself with warmth and concern wholly from zeal for the truth and purity of the gospel, and their welfare and happiness. He endeavours to soften their spirits toward him, that they might be better disposed to receive admonitions. Hereby he teaches that in reproving others we should take care to convince them that our reproofs do not proceed from private resentment, but from sincere regard to the honour of God and religion, and their welfare; they are likely to be most successful, when most disinterested.

The apostle reminds the Galatians of the difficulty under which he laboured when he came first among them. We can have no certain knowledge what this infirmity or weakness was, which in the following words he expresses by his temptation that was in his flesh, though, no doubt, it was well known to these christians to whom he wrote. But he takes notice that they did not despise

or reject him, but showed great respect to him; he was a welcome messenger to them, even as though an angel of God or Jesus Christ himself had preached to them. So great was their esteem; that, if it would have been any advantage, they could have plucked out their own eyes, and have given them to him. How very uncertain is the favour and respect of men! how apt they are to change their minds, and how easily they are drawn into contempt of those for whom they once had the greatest esteem and affection! Let us labour to be accepted of God, it is a small thing to be judged of man's judgment, 1 Cor. 4. 3.

You once thought yourselves happy in receiving the gospel; have you now reason to think otherwise? Those who have left their first love, should consider. Where is now their blessedness; what is become of the pleasure which they used to take in communion with God, and in the company of his servants? The more strongly to impress on them just shame as to their present conduct, he again asks, ver. 16, Am I become your enemy, because I tell you the truth? Can you pretend any other reason than that I have told you the truth, endeavoured to acquaint you with, and to confirm you in the truth of the gospel? It is no uncommon thing for men to account those their enemies, who are really their best friends; for so, undoubtedly, those are, whether ministers or others, who tell them the truth, and deal freely and faithfully with them in matters relating to their eternal salvation, as the apostle now did with these christians. Yet christians must not forbear speaking the truth, for fear of offending others. They may be easy in their own minds, if others are their enemies, only for telling them the truth. Yet this is often the case, not with mere professors only, but with misguided believers, when they are seduced by those who would, to attach them to themselves, alienate them from their faithful pastors; and who would even hazard their souls to promote their own credit, or that of their sect.

The character of the false teachers who drew the Galatians from the truth of the gospel is given, ver. 17, 18. They were designing men, who, under specious pretences, consulted their own interest. They pretend affection to you,

but they are not sincere and upright in their professions. They would even exclude the Galatians from the liberty and salvation of Christ, to engross them to themselves. This was their design, therefore the Galatians must be very unwise in hearkening to them. There may appear much zeal, where there is little truth and sincerity. On this occasion an excellent rule is given, ver. 18; It is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing. But zeal should be exercised only upon what is good; for it is only good, when in a good thing; those who are zealously affected to evil, will thereby only do the more hurt. And that herein it be constant and steady: it is good to be zealous always in a good thing; not for a time only, or now and then, but constantly. Happy would it be for the church of Christ, if this rule was better observed among christians.

That good things may be well done, good ends must be propounded, and we must be constant in the good which we do.—(56.)

15. To give one's eyes for a person appears to have been a proverbial expression, intimating the highest tokens of the strongest affection.—*A. Clarke.*

Ver. 19, 20. The Galatians were ready to account the apostle their enemy, but he assures them that he was their friend; nay, that he had the feelings of a parent toward them. He calls them his children, since he had been the instrument of their conversion to the christian faith; his little children, which denotes the greatest degree of tenderness and affection to them, and may possibly have respect to their present behaviour, whereby they showed themselves like little children, who are easily wrought upon by the arts and insinuations of others. He expresses his deep concern for them, and earnest desire of their welfare and soul-prosperity; he travailed in birth for them: he was most earnestly desirous that Christ might be formed in them, that they might become christians indeed, and be more confirmed and established in the faith of the gospel. Faithful ministers are most earnestly longing for their people, not so much that they may gain their affections, much less that they may make a prey of them, but that they may be renewed in the spirit of their minds,

wrought into the image of Christ, more fully settled and confirmed in the christian faith and life. How unreasonably must those people act, who suffer themselves to be prevailed on to desert or dislike such ministers! And Christ is not fully formed in men till they are brought off from trusting in their own righteousness, and made to rely only upon him and his righteousness.

He longed to be with them that he might witness the happy change he desired should be among them, and that he might alter the words of reproof for those of encouragement and commendation; or change his expressions as different circumstances and characters required, which could not be done in writing. For he was in doubt respecting their state, and was anxious to know the result of their present delusions.

Many ministers, by their experience, can enter into the meaning of the apostle; as their anguish for those whom they hoped were converted, has been greater than their earnestness for their conversion, and their prayers and endeavours more fervent. Nothing is so sure a proof a sinner has passed into a state of justification, as Christ formed in him by the renewal of the Holy Spirit; but this cannot be hoped for while men depend on the law for acceptance with God.

Ver. 21—27. The apostle illustrates the difference between believers who rested in Christ only, and the judaizers who trusted in the law, by a comparison from the history of Isaac and Ishmael. Since they were so fond of being under the law, he would have them consider what is written, Gen. 16. and 21. Those who desire to be under the law should hear what the law says to them: this would in every case teach them to flee from it, to the grace of the gospel.

He represents the different state and condition of the two sons of Abraham. The one, Ishmael, was his son by a bond-maid, and the other, Isaac, by a free-woman; and whereas the former was born after the flesh, or by the ordinary course of nature, the other was by promise, when in the course of nature there was no reason to expect that Sarah should have a son. These things are an allegory, wherein, beside the literal and historical sense of the words, the Spirit of God might signify some-

thing further to us. And these two, Hagar and Sarah, contained an apt emblem to typify and prefigure the two different dispensations of the covenant. The former, Hagar, represented that from mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which, in comparison of the gospel state, was a dispensation of bondage, and became more so to the jews, through their mistaking its design, and expecting to be justified by its works. For Hagar, the bond-woman, was the emblem of mount Sinai, in the deserts bordering on Arabia, the country afterwards peopled by her descendants, and beyond the boundaries of the promised land. From that mountain the law was given, and the covenant relating to it was ratified. It therefore corresponded to Jerusalem and its inhabitants, as outward worshippers of God, in the ordinances performed at the temple. For as far as they continued under the Sinai covenant, especially when they had rejected Christ and the gospel, they were influenced by the slavish spirit of bondage, and did not act as the children of God.

The heavenly Jerusalem, the true church from above, represented by Sarah, is in a state of freedom, and is the mother of all believers, who are born of the Spirit. It had long before been declared that this church should mainly consist of gentile converts, Is. 54. 1; and believers, whether jews or gentiles, like Isaac, were the children of promise. They were, by regeneration and true faith, made a part of the true seed of Abraham, in virtue of the promise made to him, that in his Seed should all the nations of the earth be blessed.

The christian church, which was once in a forlorn condition, shall in due time have more converts and members than the jewish church, which enjoyed God's presence, favours and protection, in the prophet's time, when this was uttered by him.—(12.)

24. "Which things are thus allegorized by me;" that is, under the veil of the literal sense, they contain a further, or mystical sense.—*T. H. Horne. See Newcome.* Or, are and may be thus allegorized. The coincidence of circumstances in the two cases is so exact, and the manner of the apostle's words such as to convey far more than the sense of accommodation, they may be considered as emblematical, by the correspondence of type and anti-type.—*Blountfield.* St. Paul did not pronounce the history itself an allegory. He declared only that it was allegorized.—*Townsend.* In no part of the New Tes-

tament is the title of allegory applied to any portion of the Mosaic history.

25. Or, This word Agar is (the name given to) mount Sinai, in Arabia. Agar, in arabic, signifies a rock or rocky mountain, and this was an appellation given to mount Sinai, by the people of the surrounding country.

24, 25. The word rendered 'are' and 'is,' in these two verses, means 'represents.' Hence we may clearly see the absurdity of the roman catholic interpretation of that word in a strictly literal sense, in those passages which speak of the Eucharist.—*Valpy*.

Ver. 29—31. The history thus explained is applied. Now we, as Isaac was, are the children of the promise. Christians, who accept Christ, rely on him, and look for justification and salvation by him alone, become the spiritual, though not the natural seed of Abraham. They are entitled to the promised inheritance, and interested in its blessings. But, lest these christians should stumble at the opposition from the jews, who were so tenacious of their law, as to be ready to persecute those who would not submit to it, this was pointed to in the type. For as then he that was born after the flesh, persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, they must expect it would be so. But, for their comfort in this case, the scripture saith, Gen 21. 10, Cast out the bond-woman and her son, for the son of the bond-woman shall not be heir with the son of the free-woman. Though the judaizers should persecute and hate them, yet the end would be, that judaism would sink, and be cast out of the church, but true christianity would flourish and last for ever. As the sum of what had been said he adds, So then, brethren, we are not children of the bond-woman, but of the free. If the exclusive privileges of all believers were so superior, according to the new covenant, how absurd was it for the gentile converts to desire to be under the law, which could not deliver the unbelieving jews from bondage or condemnation!

We should not have discovered this allegory in the history of Sarah and Hagar, if it had not been shown to us, and much care and sobriety ought to be used in thus applying scripture-narrations; yet, as thus referred to, we cannot doubt it was intended by the Holy Spirit as a type of those things to which the inspired apostle here referred. It is an illustration of the subject under con-

sideration, not an argument in proof of it. Thus the two covenants, of works and grace, legal and evangelical professors, are here shadowed forth. For this we have the apostle's authority, and the testimony of the Holy Ghost, the best interpreter of his own meaning. 1. The differences and properties of the two covenants are here held forth—Works and fruits brought forth in a man's own strength, are legal. But if by faith in Christ, they are evangelical. The first covenant spirit is of bondage unto sin and death. The second covenant spirit is of liberty and freedom, not liberty to sin, but liberty of spirit in and unto duty. The first is a spirit of persecution; the second is a spirit of love. Let those professors look to it, and take heed to their spirits, who have a violent, rigid, imposing spirit, towards the people of God, let them take heed lest they prove Hagarites, and mere legal professors. 2. As Abraham turned aside to Hagar, so it is possible a believer may turn aside in some particular actions to the covenant of works, when through unbelief and neglect of the promise, he acts according to the law, in his own strength, or in a way of violence, not of love, towards the brethren. Yet it is not his way, not his spirit to do so; hence he is never at rest till he returns to have his dependence and rest on Christ again, Phil. 3. 3. 3. But the bond-woman and her son must be cast out. We must renounce the old covenant, the law of works as a covenant, and get free from the snares of such a spirit.—(56.)

Those who in any degree depend for justification, on circumcision, baptism, or any personal obedience on creeds, however scriptural, or on being members of any particular church, are under the covenant of works, bond-slaves, citizens of the earthly Jerusalem, under condemnation. But those born of the Spirit, believers in Christ, who trust only in his merits and grace, possess true liberty, and are heirs of heavenly happiness. If we are children of the promise, we need not wonder that carnal Ishmaels mock and persecute us; so it has been, and so it will be. Let us then rest our souls on the scriptures, and by a gospel hope and cheerful obedience, let us show that we are children of God; that we walk at liberty; and that our conversation and treasure are indeed in heaven.

29. This passage, with ch. 5. 11; 6. 17, plainly show that the persecutions suffered by the apostle were from the jews, and not for preaching christianity as opposed to heathenism, coinciding with the accounts in the Acts.—*Paley*.

CHAPTER V.

The apostle applies the foregoing discourse in an earnest exhortation, enforced by various arguments, to stand fast in the liberty of the gospel, ver. 1-12. To take heed of abusing that liberty by indulging a sinful temper, contrary to the great law of love, 13-15. And to walk in the Spirit, and not to fulfil the lusts of the flesh, which are opposite to each other, the works of which respectively are described, 16-26.

Ver. 1-6. Christ had called the churches in Galatia, by his gospel, to partake of liberty from condemnation and the ceremonial law, as well as from their former idolatries and slavery to sin and Satan. The apostle, therefore, exhorted them to stand fast in that liberty, whatever efforts were used to deprive them of it; and not to suffer the judaizing teachers, by the ceremonial law, again to bring them into bondage. He solemnly assured them that if they submitted to circumcision as necessary to justification, they would derive no benefit from Christ or his covenant. Let us aspire after the liberty which Christ bestows, and stand fast therein. We are not to suppose that it is mere circumcision of which the apostle here speaks, or that it was his design to say, that none who are circumcised could have any benefit by Christ. But as speaking of circumcision in the sense in which the judaizing teachers imposed it, who taught, that except they were circumcised, and kept the law of Moses, they could not be saved, Acts 15. 1. In this case, he declares that Christ would profit them nothing; that they were debtors to do the whole law; that Christ was become of no effect to them; and that they were fallen from grace. From which expressions it appears, that thereby they renounced the way of justification God had established. They laid themselves under an impossibility of being justified in his sight, for they became debtors to do the whole law, which required such an obedience as they were not capable of performing, and denounced a curse against those who failed in it; therefore it condemned, but could not justify them.

Having thus revolted from Christ, and built their hopes upon the law, Christ would profit them nothing. Though Jesus Christ is able to save to the uttermost, yet there are multitudes to whom he shall profit nothing.

All those who seek to be justified by the law, thereby render Christ of no effect to them. He will not be the Saviour of any who will not own and rely upon him as their only Saviour. Let us regard the warnings of the apostle to persuade to steadfastness in the doctrine and liberty of the gospel; he sets before them his own example, and that of other jews who had embraced the christian religion. Through the Spirit they were waiting for the hope of righteousness by faith. Though they had been bred up under the law, yet being, through the Spirit, brought to the knowledge of Christ, they had renounced all dependence on the works of the law, and looked for justification and salvation only by faith in him. All true christians, being taught by the Holy Spirit, waited for eternal life, the reward of righteousness, and the object of their hope, as the gift of God by faith in Christ; and not for the sake of their own works. They waited for the day of judgment, expecting to be accounted righteous in Christ, by faith alone, but by which they were brought into a justified state, and continued in it to the end. Herein they act under the direction and influence of the Holy Spirit; it is under his guidance, and by his assistance, they are persuaded and enabled to believe on Christ, and to look for the hope of righteousness. When the apostle thus represents the case of christians, it implies that if they expect to be justified and saved in any other way, they must be disappointed, therefore they are greatly concerned to adhere to the doctrine of the gospel which they have embraced.

In respect of those who were members of the christian church, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision were of any avail. The jewish convert might observe the legal ceremonies or assert his liberty, the gentile might disregard them, or might attend to them if expedient, provided he did not place any dependence on them. For these things were of no avail in Christ Jesus. They could not profit an unbeliever, if observed, nor prevent the salvation of a

believer if not observed. True faith alone received the Saviour, and interested the believer as one with Christ. This living and justifying faith, was distinguished from a dead faith, by being an operative, active principle. Especially it always showed its energy on the heart, by love to Christ and his people; and this never failed to produce the like effects on the conduct. No external privileges or profession will avail to our acceptance with God, without sincere faith in our Lord Jesus. Faith, where it is true, is a working grace; it works by love, love to God, and love to our brethren; and faith, thus working by love, is all in all in our christianity. May we be found of the number of those who, through the Spirit, wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. The danger of old lay not in things immaterial in themselves, as many forms and observances now are. But without faith working by love all else is worthless, and compared with it other things are of small value.

2. *Luther* says, This place is as it were a touchstone, whereby we may certainly and freely judge of all doctrine, works, religions, and ceremonies of all men. Whosoever teach that there is any thing necessary to salvation, besides faith in Christ, or shall devise any work or religion, or observe any rule, tradition, or ceremony whatsoever, with this opinion, that by such things they shall obtain forgiveness of sins, righteousness and everlasting life, they hear in this place the sentence of the Holy Ghost pronounced against them by the apostle, that Christ profiteth them nothing.

4. Christ is become of no effect to you. Ye are made void of, or separated from Christ, fallen from the way and doctrine of free grace. Grace and works are not consistent in the justification of a sinner. If the one has any hand in it, the other has none, Rom. 11. 6. This no way proves that the truly regenerate can really or totally fall from God's grace and favour, for by grace is meant the doctrine of grace, as Titus 2. 11. Besides, their falling from grace is only conditional, and suspended upon their seeking justification by works, in which error the truly regenerate cannot, finally at least, persist, although for a time they may be overtaken with it. See Matt. 24. 24.—*Ferguson*.

Ver. 7—12. The Galatians are called upon to consider whence it was they were so much altered from what they had been, ver. 7. They did run well. At their first setting out in christianity they had discovered becoming zeal in the ways and work of it; their behaviour was agreeable to their character and profession. The life of a christian is a race, wherein he must run, and hold

on, if he would obtain the prize. It is not enough that we run in this race, by a profession of christianity, but we must run well, by living up to that profession. Thus these christians had done for a while, but they were either turned out of the way, or faltered in it. Therefore the apostle asks, how it came to pass that they did not hold on in the way wherein they had begun to run well. He would have them closely question themselves, and seriously to consider, whether they had any good reason to hearken to those who gave them this disturbance. Many who set out fair in religion, are by some means or other hindered in their progress, or turned out of the way. It concerns those who begin to turn out of the way, or to tire in it, seriously to inquire what hinders them. Young converts would do well to consider who it is that hinders them. There is the same reason for obeying the truth that there was for embracing it; and they act very unreasonably, who, when they have begun well, suffer themselves to be hindered, so as not to persevere.

The apostle urges steadfastness in the faith and liberty of the gospel, from the evil source of that persuasion, whereby they were drawn away from it. This persuasion, says he, cometh not of him that calleth you, ver. 8. This opinion or persuasion was, no doubt, that of mixing the works of the law with faith in Christ in justification. This the judaizing teachers endeavoured to impose upon the Galatians, and they had fallen into it. This persuasion did not come of God, by whose authority the gospel had been preached, nor of the apostle himself, the instrument of calling them. He leaves them to judge whence it must arise; and sufficiently intimates, it could be owing to none but Satan and his instruments, endeavouring to overthrow their faith, and obstruct the progress of the gospel, therefore the Galatians had every reason to reject it, and continue steadfast in the truth they had before embraced. In order to judge rightly of the different persuasions in religion among christians, it concerns us to inquire, whether they come of him that calleth us, whether they are founded upon the authority of Christ and his apostles. If they have no such foundation, how forward soever others may be

to impose them, we should always reject them.

There was danger of the spreading of this infection, and it might have evil influence upon others, ver. 9. The whole lump of christianity may be tainted and corrupted by one such erroneous principle, or the whole lump of the christian society may be infected by one member. Therefore they were greatly concerned not to yield in a single instance; or, if any had done so, to endeavour to purge out the infection from among them. It is dangerous for christian churches to encourage those who entertain, especially who propagate destructive errors. The contagion might soon spread: and might soon issue in overthrowing the truth and liberty of the gospel. That he might conciliate the greater regard to what he had said, the apostle expresses his hopes concerning them, ver. 10. Though he had many fears and doubts, yet he hoped that through the blessing of God upon what he had written, they might be brought to own and maintain that truth and liberty of the gospel, which he had preached to them, and was now endeavouring to confirm them in. Herein he teaches us to hope even of those concerning whom we have cause to fear. He was sensible that there were some that troubled them, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. In reproving sin and error, we should always distinguish between the leaders and the led; such as set themselves to draw others thereinto, and such as are drawn aside by them. Thus the apostle softens the fault of these christians, even while reproving them, that he might the better persuade them to return to, and stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ had made them free. But those that troubled them, God would deal with according to their deserts.

The preaching of the cross of Christ, or the doctrine of justification and salvation only by faith in Christ crucified, was to the jews a stumbling-block, 1 Cor. 1. 23. They were most offended at christianity, because thereby circumcision, and the whole of the legal administration, were set aside, and Christ preached as the only salvation for sinners. This stirred them up to oppose and persecute the professors of it. If Paul and others would have admitted that circumcision was still to be retained,

and the observance of the law of Moses joined with faith in Christ, as necessary to salvation, then their opposition would have been in a great measure removed, and the believers might have avoided the sufferings they underwent for the sake of it. But he rather chose to hazard his ease and credit, yea, his very life itself, than thus to corrupt the truth, and give up the liberty of the gospel. Thus the apostle clears himself from the unjust reproach his enemies had cast upon him, and at the same time shows how little regard was due to those who could treat him in such an injurious manner, and how much reason he had to wish that they were even cut off from their society, and thus kept from doing any more mischief in it. The first beginnings of such leaven should be strenuously opposed, and those who unsettle or perplex others should be cut off from their communion. And assuredly those who persist in disturbing the church of Christ must at last bear their judgment.

Ver. 13—18. The apostle exhorts to serious practical godliness. He would have them stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ had made them free; but not thence indulge themselves in corrupt affections and practices, particularly such as might be the ground of quarrels and contentions. He would have them maintain that mutual love and affection, which, notwithstanding any lesser differences, would dispose them to offices of respect and kindness to each other. The liberty we enjoy as christians, is not a licentious liberty: though Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, yet he has not freed us from the obligation of it. The gospel is a doctrine according to godliness, 1 Tim. 6. 3, and is so far from giving the least countenance to sin, that it lays us under the strongest obligation to avoid and subdue it, and always to maintain such tempers as may dispose us by love to serve one another. To this the apostle endeavours to persuade these christians, and urges that all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ver. 14. It will appear that we are the disciples of Christ indeed, when we have love one to another, John 13. 35, and where this temper is kept up, if it does not

wholly extinguish discords among christians, the fatal consequences will be prevented. But if, instead of acting like men and christians, they behaved like brute beasts, in tearing and rending one another, they could expect nothing, but that they would be consumed one of another. Mutual strifes among brethren, if persisted in, are likely to prove their common ruin. If christians, who should help one another, and rejoice one another, act thus, what can be expected but that the God of love should deny his grace, and the Spirit of love depart, and that the evil spirit, who seeks their destruction, should prevail?

They should all strive against sin; and happy would it be, if christians, instead of biting and devouring one another on account of different opinions, would set themselves against sin in themselves and the places where they live. Above every thing else we should oppose sin. To excite christians hereto, the apostle shows, 1. That in every one the flesh, the corrupt and carnal part of us, lusts, strives, and struggles with strength and vigour against the spirit, and resists every thing that is spiritual. On the other hand, the spirit, the renewed part of us, strives against the flesh, and opposes its will and desire. Hence it comes to pass, that we cannot do the things that we would. As the principle of grace in us will not suffer us to do all the evil to which our corrupt nature would prompt us, so neither can we do all the good we would, by reason of oppositions from that corrupt and carnal principle. In a natural state the convictions of conscience, and the corruptions of the heart, strive with one another; convictions would suppress corruptions, and corruptions would silence convictions; and in a renewed man, there is a struggle between the old nature and the new nature, the remainders of sin and the beginnings of grace; and christians must expect this will be their exercise as long as they continue in this world. 2. Here is shown that it is our duty and interest vigorously to oppose and overcome the flesh. The apostle directs to the most effectual means of success. One general rule, if duly observed, would be a sovereign remedy against the prevalence of corruption; that is, to walk in the Spirit, ver.

16. By the Spirit here may be meant the Holy Spirit himself, who condescends to dwell in the hearts of those whom he has renewed and sanctified, to guide and assist them in their duty. Or, that gracious principle which he implants in the souls of his people, and which lusts against the flesh, that corrupt principle which still remains in them. The duty here recommended is, that we set ourselves to act under the guidance and influence of the blessed Spirit, and if this be our care in the ordinary course and tenour of our lives, though we may not be freed from the stirrings and oppositions of our corrupt nature, we shall be kept from fulfilling it in the lusts thereof; so that though it remain in us, it shall not obtain a dominion over us.

If we make the word of God our rule, and the grace of God our principle; it will appear that we are not under the law; not under the condemning, though still under the commanding power of it, Rom. 8. 1. Believers are engaged in a perpetual conflict in which they earnestly desire that grace may obtain complete and speedy victory. And those who desire thus to give themselves up to be led by the Holy Spirit, are not under the law as a covenant of works, nor exposed to its awful curse for every failure in their obedience; and their hatred of sin, and desires after holiness, according to the perfect rule of God's commands, prove that they are interested in the salvation of the gospel.

Ver. 19—23. Here are specified the works of the flesh, which must be watched against and mortified, and the fruits of the Spirit, which must be brought forth and cherished. 1. The works of the flesh are many and manifest. The things here spoken of are the product of corrupt and depraved nature; most are condemned by the light of nature itself, and all by the light of scripture. Some are sins against the seventh commandment; not only the gross acts of these sins, but all such thoughts, or words, or actions, as tend toward the outward transgression. Some are sins against the first and second commandments; others are sins against our neighbour, and contrary to the royal law of

brotherly love; such as hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, which too often occasion, and sometimes break out into grosser acts. Others are sins against ourselves, such as drunkenness and revellings. Emulations signify that ambition of pre-eminence and thirst for glory, which excite men to vie with each other. Those who do not attend to the bible, deem this the noblest principle of human action, yet it springs from mere pride and selfishness, and is nearly allied to envy. When the object of emulation is evil, the effects are dreadful; when the object is good, man's glory is substituted for the glory of God, and the thirst for human applause has caused more breaches of the law of love, and has done more to desolate the earth than sensuality.

And let us remember that hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies and envyings, are as much the works of the flesh as murders, adulteries, or sensual excesses; and that these will certainly exclude men from heaven, whatever profession of religion they make; nay, though religion be the pretence for their malignant passions. Of these and such like, says the apostle, I tell you before, as I have also told you in times past, that they who do such things, how much soever they may flatter themselves with vain hopes, shall not inherit the kingdom of God. These sins will undoubtedly shut men out of heaven. Yet what numbers, calling themselves christians, live in these, and say they hope for heaven, though they neglect repentance and faith! The world of spirits cannot be comfortable to those who plunge themselves in the filth of the flesh; nor will the righteous and holy God admit such into his favour and presence, unless they are first washed and sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God, 1 Cor. 6. 11.

2. The fruits of the Spirit, or the renewed nature, which as christians we are concerned to bring forth, ver. 22, 23, are specified. As sin is called the work of the flesh, because the flesh, or corrupt nature, is the principle that moves and excites to it; so grace is said to be the fruit of the Spirit, because it wholly proceeds from the Spirit, as the fruit does from the root. And as before the apostle had chiefly specified works of

the flesh, not only hurtful to men themselves, but tending to make them so to one another; so here he chiefly notices the fruits of the Spirit, which tended to make christians agreeable one to another, as well as to make them happy. He particularly recommends to us "Love," to God especially, and to one another for his sake—"Joy," by which may be understood cheerfulness in conversation with our friends, or rather constant delight in God—"Peace" with God and conscience, or peaceableness of temper and behaviour towards others—"Long-suffering," patience to defer anger, and contentedness to bear injuries—"Gentleness," such sweetness of temper, and especially towards our inferiors, as disposes us to be affable and courteous, and easy to be entreated when another has wronged us—"Goodness," kindness and beneficence, which shows itself in readiness to do good to all as we have opportunity—"Faith," fidelity, justice, and honesty, in what we profess and promise to others—"Meekness," wherewith to govern our passions and resentments, so as not to be easily provoked, and, when we are so, to be soon pacified—and "Temperance," in the enjoyments of life. Concerning these, or those in whom these fruits of the Spirit are found, there is no law to condemn and punish them. They are not under the law, but under grace; for these fruits of the Spirit plainly show, that such are led by the Spirit, consequently, that they are not under the law.

Ver. 24—26. By specifying the works of the flesh and fruits of the Spirit, we are directed what we are to avoid and oppose, and what we are to cherish and cultivate; and this is the sincere care and endeavour of all real christians, ver. 24. Those who are Christ's—and all others belong to Satan's kingdom, however distinguished they may be—they who are christians indeed, not only in show and profession, but in sincerity and truth, have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. As in their baptism they were obliged hereunto, (for, being baptized into Christ, they were baptized into his death, Rom. 6. 3,) so they are now sincerely employing themselves herein, and, in conformity to their Lord and Head, endeavour to die unto sin, as he had died for it. They have not yet

obtained complete victory, they have still flesh as well as spirit, and its affections and lusts continue to disturb them; but sin does not now reign in their mortal bodies, so that they obey it in the lusts thereof, Rom. 6. 12, and they are seeking the utter ruin and destruction of it, and to put it to a like shameful and ignominious, though lingering death, which our Lord Jesus underwent for our sakes. If we would approve ourselves to be Christ's, united to him, and interested in him, we must make it our constant care and business to crucify the flesh with its corrupt affections and lusts. Christ never will own those who yield themselves the servants of sin. And it is not enough

that we cease to do evil, but we must learn to do well. Our christianity obliges us not only to die unto sin, but to live unto righteousness; not only to oppose the works of the flesh, but to bring forth the fruits of the Spirit also. If we would make it appear that we do indeed belong to Christ, this must be our sincere care and endeavour, and that it was the design of the apostle to represent both the one and the other as our duty, and as necessary to support our character as christians, may be gathered from ver. 25. If we profess to have received the Spirit of Christ, or that we are renewed in the spirit of our minds, and endued with a principle of spiritual life, let us make it appear by the proper fruits of the Spirit in our lives. Obedience to the law as a rule, with delight and satisfaction, and earnest desires after more exact conformity, is evidence of deliverance from the law as a covenant of works; let us evidence our good principles by good practices. Our conversation will always be answerable to the principle we are under the guidance and government of: as they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh, so they that are after the Spirit do mind the things of the Spirit, Rom. 8. 5. If therefore we would have it appear that we are Christ's and that we are partakers of his Spirit, it must be by our walking not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. We must set ourselves in earnest to mortify the deeds of the body, and to walk in newness of life.

Here is a caution against being desirous of vain-glory, or an undue wish for the esteem and applause of men;

because this, if indulged, would certainly lead them to provoke one another, and to envy one another. As far as this temper prevails among christians, they will be ready to slight and despise those whom they look upon as inferior, and to be displeased if denied the respect they think their due; they will also envy others. Thus a foundation is laid for quarrels and contentions. The glory which comes from men, is vain-glory; instead of desiring it, we should be dead to it. For undue regard to the approbation and applause of men, is one great ground of the unhappy strifes and contentions among christians. And the imperfection of our attainments, leaves room both for personal humiliation, and mutual exhortation. If then we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit, watching against spiritual pride and vain-glory, not provoking nor envying one another, but following after love, and seeking to bring forth more abundantly those good fruits which are, through Jesus Christ, to the praise and glory of God.

CHAPTER VI.

The apostle proceeds in exhortations to meekness, gentleness, and humility, 1-5. To the maintenance of ministers, and beneficence towards all men, especially towards true believers, 6-10. He sums up the main design of this epistle, for guarding the Galatians against the judaizing teachers who wanted them to be circumcised for selfish ends, contrary to his own in preaching Christ crucified. And concludes with a solemn benediction, 11-18.

Ver. 1-5. The apostle gives further directions, which, if observed, would render our behaviour more agreeable to our christian profession, and more useful and comfortable to one another.

1. We are to deal tenderly with those overtaken in a fault, ver. 1. It is one thing to overtake a fault by doing wrong with contrivance and deliberation; and another thing to be overtaken in a fault. Christians must restore such with the spirit of meekness, labouring to bring them to repentance. The original word signifies to set in joint, as a dislocated bone; accordingly, we should endeavour to convince them of their sin and error, persuading them to return to their duty, comforting them in a sense of pardoning mercy, and then confirming our love to them. This

is to be done with the spirit of meekness ; as those who mourn for a brother's fall. Many needful reproofs lose their efficacy by being given in wrath. And we ought to deal tenderly with those overtaken in sin, because we also may be tempted, yea, and overcome by temptation ; if we rightly consider ourselves, this will dispose us to great compassion, and to do by others as we desire to be done by.

2. To bear one another's burdens, ver. 2. This may teach us to exercise forbearance in those weaknesses, follies, and infirmities, which too often attend us ; that, though we should not wholly connive at them, yet we should not be severe against one another. As a general precept, it directs us to sympathize with one another under the trials and troubles we may meet with, and to be ready to afford each other the comfort and help circumstances require. So we shall fulfil the law of Christ. The law of his precept is the law of love, and obliges us to mutual forbearance and compassion towards each other ; also agreeably to his pattern and example, which have the force of a law to us. Christ bears with us under our weaknesses and follies ; he is touched with a fellow-feeling of our infirmities ; this is a very good reason why we should maintain the same temper towards one another. Though as christians we are freed from the law of Moses, yet we are under the law of Christ ; therefore, instead of laying unnecessary burdens upon others, it becomes us to bear one another's burdens, as fellow-travellers.

It is very common for a man to think himself to be something, to look upon himself as wiser and better than other men, and as fit to dictate and prescribe to them, when in truth he has nothing that can be a ground of the confidence and superiority he assumes. Such a one deceives himself ; by pretending to what he has not, he puts the greatest cheat upon himself, and sooner or later will find the sad effects. This will never gain esteem, either with God or men. He is neither more free from mistakes, nor more secure against temptations, for the good opinion he has of his own sufficiency, but is the more liable to fall into them, and to be overcome by them. Instead therefore of indulging a vain-glorious humour, destructive of the love and kindness we owe to our fellow-chris-

tians, and also injurious to ourselves, it would be much better to accept the apostle's exhortation, Phil. 2. 3, To do nothing through strife or vain-glory ; but that in lowliness of mind we should each esteem other better than ourselves. Self-conceit is but self-deceit, and there is none more dangerous.

3. Every one is advised to prove his own work, ver. 4. To examine our own actions and behaviour by the rule of God's word, to see whether they are such as God and conscience approve. Our business lies more with ourselves than with others. To keep us from being proud of ourselves, let us prove our ourselves. The better we are acquainted with our own hearts and ways, the less liable shall we be to despise others, and the more disposed to compassionate and help them under infirmities and afflictions.

This is the way to have rejoicing in ourselves alone. If we are in earnest to prove our own work, and our sincerity and uprightness toward God, we may expect to have comfort and peace in our own souls, by the attestation of the sanctifying Spirit to our faith in Christ. This would be much better ground of joy and satisfaction than to be able to rejoice in another, either in the good opinion others may have of us, or in having gained over others to our opinion, in which the false teachers were wont to glory ; or by comparing ourselves with others, as some who are ready to think well of themselves, because they are not so bad as others. Too many value themselves upon such accounts as these ; but no real joy results thence, nothing to that which arises from an impartial trial of ourselves by the rule of God's word, and our being able thereupon to approve ourselves to him.

Another argument to press upon us the duty of proving our own work, is—That every man shall bear his own burden.

How light soever men's sins seem to them when they are committed, yet they will be found not light, but a heavy burden when they come to reckon with God about them.—(79.) No man can pay a ransom for his brother, and we see the nature of sin, that it is a burden to the soul. It is a spiritual burden, and the less a man feels it to be such, the more cause has he to suspect that the graces of God are decayed in him. The greater

number are dead in their sins, and therefore have not sight or sense of the spiritual burden of sin. This also admonishes us to take heed of every sin, for there is no sin so small but it has its own weight, and though some sink a man deeper to condemnation, yet many small sins will as easily ruin the soul as a few great ones. So we, feeling the weight and burden of our sins, are to labour to be disburdened and eased thereof. And though, by the sentence of the law, every one is to bear his own burden, and to satisfy for his sin in his own person, yet the gospel makes an exception, that those who have their sins set upon Christ shall not give account for them again. And those who have the burden laid upon Him, who hath borne our sins in his own body on the cross, shall not themselves bear the burden of them at the last judgment.—(56.)

There is a day coming, when we must all give an account of ourselves to God; and he declares that then the judgment will proceed, and the sentence pass, not according to the sentiments of the world concerning us, or any ungrounded opinion we may have had of ourselves, or upon our having been better or worse than others, but according as our state and behaviour have really been in the sight of God. And if there be such an awful time to be expected, when he will render to every one according to his works, surely there is the greatest reason why we should prove our own works now. If we must certainly be called to an account hereafter, surely we ought often to call ourselves to an account here, to see whether we are such as God will own and approve them. And as this is our duty, so if it were more our practice, we should entertain more becoming thoughts both of ourselves and our fellow-christians; and be more ready to fulfil that law of Christ, by which we must be judged, in bearing one another's burdens. If any were deluded into fatal errors by false teachers, every one must bear the burden of his own guilt, nor would the condemnation of the deceiver relieve him who had been deceived.

1. "Considering thyself." This sudden transition from the plural number to the singular, adds much beauty and force to the caution, urging it upon every individual to look to himself, and to be more disposed to be kind to others.—*Blackwall*

Ver. 6—11. Christians are exhorted to be free and liberal in maintaining their ministers, ver. 6. As there are some to be taught, so there are others to teach them. Ministers are to teach and instruct others in the word of God, 2 Tim. 4. 2. They are to declare the counsel of God, Acts 20. 27; 2 Cor. 1. 24. The word of God is the only rule of faith and life; this they are to study and open for the edification of others, but they are to be regarded no further than as they speak according to this rule. Those who are taught in the word, are to support those appointed to teach them. And this is the appointment of God himself; for as under the law, those who ministered about holy things, lived of the things of the temple, so hath the Lord ordained, that those who preach the gospel, should live of the gospel. 1 Cor. 9. 11—14.

Here is a caution not to mock God, or deceive ourselves, by imagining he can be imposed upon by mere pretensions or professions, ver. 7. Many are apt to excuse themselves from the work of religion, especially the self-denying and chargeable parts, though they may make a show and profession of it. But though they may possibly impose upon others, yet they deceive themselves if they think to impose upon God, who is perfectly acquainted with their hearts as well actions; and as he cannot be deceived, so he will not be mocked. Our present time is seed-time, in the other world we shall reap as we sow now. As there are two sorts of sowing, one to the flesh, and the other to the Spirit, so will the reckoning be hereafter. Those who live a carnal, sensual life, who, instead of employing themselves to the honour of God, and the good of others, spend their thoughts, care, and time about the flesh, though it be under a profession of the gospel, must expect no other fruit from such a course than corruption. A mean and short-lived satisfaction at present, and misery and ruin at the end of it. But those who sow to the Spirit, who, under the guidance and influence of the Holy Spirit, live a holy and spiritual life, a life of devotedness to God and of usefulness and serviceableness to others, exercising daily repentance, faith in Christ, and christian graces, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting; they

shall have the truest comfort in their present course, and eternal life and happiness at the end.

Here is a further caution, ver. 9. As we should not excuse ourselves from any part of our duty, so neither should we grow weary in it. We are all very apt to tire in duty, and to fall off from it, particularly that part to which the apostle has special regard, the doing good to others. This he would have us carefully watch and guard against; he assures us, that there is a recompense of reward in reserve for all who sincerely employ themselves in well-doing; but if we grow weary, and withdraw from it, we shall not only miss this reward, but lose the comfort and advantage of what we have already done, while though our reward may be delayed, yet it will surely come, and will make abundant recompense for all our pains and constancy. Perseverance in well-doing is our wisdom and interest, as well as duty, for to this only is the reward promised.

Here is an exhortation to all to do good in their places, ver. 10. We are not to confine our charity within too narrow bounds, but should extend it to all, as far as we are capable, and they stand in need of us. Yet, in the exercise of it, we are to have special regard to those who profess the same faith, and are members of the same body of Christ. The rule we are to observe in doing good to others, is, as we have opportunity. We must not, as many do, neglect it in our life-time, and defer it till we come to die; for as we cannot be sure that we shall then have an opportunity, much less can we atone for our past neglects by leaving something behind us for the good of others, when we can no longer keep it ourselves. We should take care to do good in our life-time, to make this the business of our lives. Whenever fresh occasions offer, as far as our capacity reaches, we should be ready to embrace them. As God has made it our duty to do good to others, so he takes care in his providence to furnish us with opportunities. We need godly wisdom and discretion to direct us in the exercise of charity and beneficence.

Let us examine what it is we are now sowing. If any have hitherto sown to the flesh, let them fear lest they reap corruption; let them begin, in the exercise

of faith, repentance, and prayer, to sow to the Spirit, that they may reap everlasting life. And let us remember that not only do those who have no root in themselves, lose all their labour about religion, by drawing back in the time of temptation, but even believers lose much of their comfort and usefulness, by fainting through discouragements and want of zeal and patience.

Ver. 12—15. The apostle refers to the length of the epistle, probably the longest he had written with his own hand. —(11.)

The false teachers were very zealous for the externals of religion; forward to observe, and to oblige others to observe, ceremonial rites, though they had little regard to real piety; for it is said of them, Neither do they themselves keep the law. Proud, vain, and carnal hearts desire to make a fair show in the flesh; and can easily be content with just so much religion as will help them to keep up such a fair show; but those are destitute of the substance of religion, who are the most anxious to make a show of it. They were afraid of suffering; they chiefly aimed to please the Jews, and so to escape the troubles which faithful followers of Christ incurred. And they were men of party-spirit, who had no further zeal for the law than as it served their selfish designs; they desired to have the Christians circumcised, that they might glory in their flesh, ver. 13, that they might say, they had made proselytes of them. Thus, while they pretended to promote religion, they were its greatest enemies.

The apostle professes his own faith, hope, and joy; and that his principal glory was in the cross of Christ, ver. 14. By the cross of Christ is here meant, his sufferings and death on the cross, or the doctrine of salvation by a crucified Redeemer. This was what the Jews stumbled at, and the Greeks accounted foolishness. The Judaizing teachers, to avoid persecution from the Jews, mixed the observance of the law of Moses with faith in Christ, as necessary to salvation. But Paul, so far from being offended at the cross of Christ, or ashamed of it, or afraid to own it, desires to glory in nothing else, and rejects the thought of setting any thing in competition with it, as the object

of his esteem. This was the ground of all his hope as a christian; this was the doctrine which, as an apostle, he was resolved to preach. Whatever trials his firm adherence to it might bring upon him, he was ready, not only to submit to them, but to rejoice in them. The cross of Christ is a christian's chief glory, and there is the greatest reason why we should glory in it, for to it we owe all our joys and hopes.

He was dead to the world. By Christ, or by the cross of Christ, the world was crucified to him, and he to the world; he had experienced the power and virtue of it in weaning him from the world.

He had the friendship, riches, honours, and pleasures of the world, and disregarded its reproach and hatred, as he would have done those of a crucified malefactor. This is a temper of mind all christians should labour after; the best way to attain it, is, to converse much with the cross of Christ; the more we contemplate the sufferings the Redeemer met with from the world, the less likely shall we be to love it.

He viewed the world as little affected by all its charms, as a spectator would be by any thing which had been graceful the countenance of a crucified person, when he beholds it blackened in the agonies of death. He was no more affected by the objects around him, than one who is expiring would be struck with any of the prospects his dying eyes might view from the cross on which he hung.—(89.)

And well might it be expected that it should be so, for as to those who have truly believed in Christ Jesus, all things are counted as utterly worthless compared with him; the whole dependence of the soul for righteousness and life is built on him, and the whole heart centres in him. When this is the case, neither jewish rites nor neglect of them could profit or hurt; there is actually a new creation. Old things are passed away, and new views and dispositions are introduced under the regenerating influences of God the Holy Spirit. In consequence of this, believers are brought into a new world, and being created in Christ Jesus unto good works, are formed to a life of holiness, and quickened to exercise faith which works by love.—(90.)

The consistent christian nobly disdains all low aims. He only glories in the cross of Christ as the foundation

of all his hopes; and this faith in a crucified Saviour causes him to desire to live no longer to himself, but to him who died for him, and rose again. He overcomes the love of worldly objects, and is reconciled to hardships, poverty, reproach, and hatred for his Lord's sake. From all this it appears that it is a change of mind and heart, whereby we are disposed and enabled to believe in the Lord Jesus, and to live a life of devotedness to God; and that where this inward vital practical religion is wanting, no outward professions, or particular names, will ever stand in any stead. Christians should lay the stress of their religion where God has laid it, on the things accepted with him.

13. *Augustine* observes that these judaizing christians were zealous for ceremonial observances, therefore here seems to be reference principally to the moral law.

Ver. 16—18. The apostle had shown what was of chief consideration in religion; not a mere empty name or profession, but a sound and saving change. Here he asserts that a new creation to the image of Christ, as evidencing faith in him, is the greatest distinction between one man and another, in ver. 16, and pronounces a blessing upon all who walk according to this rule. Peace be upon them, and mercy upon the Israel of God; who follow the doctrine of the gospel, or way of justification and salvation, laid down in this epistle, by faith in Christ without the works of the law; and this has immediate reference to the new creature, which had been spoken of. The blessings are, peace and mercy—peace with God and conscience, and all the comforts of this life, as far as they are needful—and mercy, an interest in the free love and favour of God in Christ, the spring and fountain of all other blessings. These shall be the portion of all the Israel of God, all sincere christians, whether jews or gentiles; all who are israelites indeed, the spiritual seed of Abraham. These, being heirs of his faith, are also heirs together with him of the same promise, and consequently entitled to the peace and mercy here spoken of. The jews and judaizing teachers would confine these blessings to such as kept the law of Moses; but, on the contrary, the apostle declares they belong to all who walk according to the rule of the gospel, or of the new creature, even to all

the Israel of God. Real christians walk by rule; not by a rule of their own, devising, but what God himself has prescribed. Even those who walk according to this rule yet need the mercy of God. But all who sincerely endeavour to walk according to this rule, may be assured that peace and mercy shall be upon them. This is the best way to have peace with God, ourselves, and others; and hereupon, as we may be sure of the favour of God now, so we may be sure that we shall find mercy with him hereafter.

The written word of God is the rule we are to go by, both in its doctrines and precepts. Let us be careful that we regulate our principles and conduct by it, then will peace and mercy be upon us. And however diligently we observe this rule, how exactly soever we conform to it, and how much soever we suffer for our adherence to it, we depend upon mercy for the communication of peace, and must ascribe all our hopes of happiness to pardoning mercy and free grace. May that grace ever be with our spirit, to sanctify, quicken, and cheer us, and may we always be ready to maintain the honour of that which is indeed our life.—(86.)

The apostle cheerfully suffered persecution, ver. 17. As he chiefly gloried in the cross of Christ, or the doctrine of salvation by a crucified Redeemer, so he had run all hazards rather than betray this truth, or suffer it to be corrupted. The false teachers were afraid of persecution, and this was the great reason why they were so zealous for circumcision. But this was the least of Paul's concern; he was not moved at any of the afflictions he met with. Acts 20. 24. He bore in his body the marks of the Lord Jesus, the scars of wounds which he had sustained from persecuting enemies, for his steady adherence to Christ, and that doctrine of the gospel he had received from him. With a becoming warmth and vehemence, suitable to his authority as an apostle, and to the deep concern of mind he was under, he insists that no man should henceforth trouble him, by opposing his doctrine and authority, or by such calumnies and reproaches as had been cast upon him. It is very unjust to charge things upon others, which are contrary not only to their profession, but their sufferings also.

The apostle concludes the epistle with his apostolical benediction, ver. 18. He calls the Galatians his brethren, wherein he shows his humility and his tender affection for them, notwithstanding the ill-treatment he had met with from them; and takes his leave of them with this very serious and affectionate prayer, that the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ may be with their spirit. And herein he prays, that they might enjoy the favour of Christ, both in its special effects and its sensible evidences; that they might receive from Him all that grace which was needful to guide them in their way, to strengthen them in their work, to establish them in their christian course, and to encourage and comfort them under all the trials of life, and in the prospect of death itself. This is fitly called the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, as he is both the sole purchaser and the appointed dispenser: and though these churches had done enough to forfeit it, by suffering themselves to be drawn into an opinion and practice highly dishonourable to Christ, as well as dangerous to them; yet, out of his great concern for them, and knowing its importance, he earnestly desires it on their behalf; yea, that it might be with their spirit, that they might continually experience the influences of it upon their souls, disposing and enabling them to act with sincerity and uprightness in religion. We need desire no more to make us happy than the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. This the apostle begs for these christians, and therein shows us what we are chiefly concerned to obtain.

The apostle does not pray that the law of Moses, or the righteousness of works, but that the grace of Christ might be with them; not in the mere notion, but in the spiritual experience of it; that it might be in their hearts and with their spirits, quickening, comforting, and strengthening them; making them more spiritual and evangelical in their frames and duties, and freeing them from a carnal and legal spirit; to all which he sets his Amen; signifying his desire that so it might be, and his faith that so it would be.—(27.)

17. Here is generally supposed to be a reference to the marks with which slaves were branded in ancient times.

THE EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS.

THE account of St. Paul's first preaching at Ephesus, is recorded Acts 18, about A. D. 54. In the following year he returned to that city, and laboured with extraordinary success among the gentiles, Acts 19 and 20. In the latter chapter we have the deeply affecting interview of the apostle with the elders of the Ephesian church at Miletus.

The testimony of antiquity, including the express citations of Ignatius, who was contemporary with St. Paul, fully determine the genuineness and authenticity of this epistle, and show that it was not written to the Laodiceans, as some modern writers have supposed, on insufficient grounds.

This epistle was written when St. Paul was a prisoner at Rome. The design appears to be to establish the Ephesians in the faith of Christ, and to give exalted views of the love of God, and of the dignity and excellency of Christ, fortifying their minds at the same time against the scandal of the cross. He shows them that they were saved by grace, and that however wretched they once were, they now had equal privileges with the jews. He encourages them to persevere in their christian calling, and urges them to walk in a manner becoming their profession, faithfully discharging both the general and common duties of religion, and the special duties of particular relations.

After the prefatory inscription, ch. 1. 1, 2, we have the body or substance of the epistle.

I. Informatory or doctrinal. Here the apostle states God's saving benefit to the Ephesians, and consequently to others, setting forth the causes of salvation. These he particularizes, ch. 1. 3—14. From the account he had heard of them he expresses his thankfulness to God, and prays earnestly for them, ver. 15—19. Having mentioned the exceeding greatness of God's power, its effects are described, on Christ their Head, ver. 20—23. And on the Ephesians themselves, ch. 2, wherein the riches of Divine grace bringing nigh the gentiles as well as the jews, are set forth. In ch. 3, the publication of these rich benefits of Christ to the gentiles, by the ministry of the apostle, is stated and enlarged on, with an ascription of glory to God.

II. In the hortatory or practical part, the apostle exhorts the Ephesians to christian duties. 1. General duties. 2. Particular duties, to walk worthy of their calling, agreeably to the unity of the Spirit, and the diversity of his gifts, ch. 4. 1—16, in a manner wholly different from their former state, 17—24, to avoid the sins specified, ch. 4. 25 to 5. 21, and faithfully to discharge the relative duties of husbands and wives, parents and children, masters and servants, ch. 5. 22, to ch. 6. 9. In conclusion, the apostle urges to be strong and constant in the Lord against all Satan's subtle temptations, describing the christian panoply or complete armour. The whole epistle is written with much animation.

Macknight says, that the sublime account contained in this epistle of the resurrection of Christ, as the Head of the church, and of his sitting down at God's right hand, as ruler both of the heavenly hosts, and earthly powers: of his being made complete by the union of his members, and of his making them alive from the death of sin, filling them with miraculous gifts and moral graces, seems to be designed as a contrast to the character and powers of the false gods worshipped by the heathens, and to the honours, advantages, and privileges which they derived from their mysteries, that the Ephesians might be sensible how far inferior they were, in dignity and happiness, to the members of the christian church.

In variety and depth of doctrine, sublimity of metaphor, and animated fervour of style, this epistle deeply interests. The apostle seems to have felt much liberty in writing to those whom he had no occasion to rebuke, and with whom he was not under the necessity of engaging in controversy. There is considerable resemblance between this epistle and that to the Colossians: both appear to have been written by the same person, at, or nearly at the same time, and upon similar subjects, and to have been sent by the same messenger. See the prefatory remarks on the epistle to the Colossians.

CHAPTER I.

The apostle prefaces his epistle with an inscription and salutation, ver. 1, 2. Gives a general account of saving blessings in a way of thanksgiving and praise. Enlarges upon them, as prepared in God's eternal election, as purchased by Christ's blood, 3—8, and as conveyed in effectual calling. He applies all this, first to the believing jews, and then to the believing gentiles, 9—14. Thanks God for what he had heard of their faith and love, and prays for the continuance of their knowledge and hope,

with respect to the heavenly inheritance, and to God's powerful working in them, answerable to what had been wrought in the resurrection and exaltation of Christ, 15—23.

Ver. 1, 2. Every faithful minister of Christ, though his call and office are not of so extraordinary a nature as St. Paul's, may, with him, reflect on it as honour and comfort to himself, that he is what he is, by the will of God. This epistle is sent to the saints which are

at Ephesus. All christians must be saints; if they come not under that character on earth, they will never be saints in glory. He calls them the faithful in Christ Jesus, believers in him, and firm and constant in his truths and ways. Those are not saints, who are not faithful, believing in Christ, firmly adhering to him, and true to the profession they make of relation to their Lord. It is not only the honour of ministers, but of private christians also, to have obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful. In Christ Jesus, from whom they derive all their grace and spiritual strength; and in whom their persons, and all that they perform, are made accepted. The apostolical benediction speaks the apostle's good-will to them, and a real desire for their welfare. By grace we are to understand the free and undeserved love and favour of God, and those graces of the Spirit which proceed from it: by peace, all other blessings, spiritual and temporal, the fruits and product of the former. No peace without grace. No peace, nor grace, but from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. These peculiar blessings proceed from God, not as a Creator, but as a Father by special relation; and they come from our Lord Jesus Christ, who, having purchased them for his people, has a right to bestow these gifts upon them; and the best saints stand in need of fresh supplies of the graces of the Spirit, and cannot but desire to improve and grow.

Ver. 3—8. Reflecting on the great things which God had done for him and by him, the apostle expresses thanksgivings. He blesses the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has done so graciously for his believing people, conferring all spiritual blessings as the earnest of heavenly happiness, by giving his Son for them, and calling on them to believe in him. Since he is exalted to heavenly places, spiritual blessings are conferred on every believer, as united to him. We should hence learn to mind spiritual and heavenly things as the principal things, spiritual and heavenly blessings as the best blessings, with which we cannot be miserable, and without which we cannot but be so.

This was the result of the choice of

them in Christ, before the foundation of the world. Not because they were in themselves more holy than others of their fallen race, but that they should be made holy by separation from sin, being consecrated to God, and sanctified by the Holy Spirit, in consequence of their election in Christ. That they should be blameless before him in love, not only as to their complete justification, but by their blameless walk before God in his commandments and ordinances, and being at length perfected in heavenly happiness. Personal holiness was provided for in every part of the Divine counsels respecting man's salvation. And as this magnifies Divine love, so it secures the blessings to God's elect; for the purpose of God according to election shall stand. He acts in pursuance of his eternal purpose, in bestowing spiritual blessings upon his people, according as he hath chosen them in him, in Christ. Observe here one great end and design of this choice; chosen--that we should be holy; not because God foresaw they would be holy, but because he determined to make them so. All who are chosen to happiness as the end, are chosen to holiness as the means. And without blame before him; that their holiness might not be only in outward appearance, so as to prevent blame from men; but internal and real, what God himself will account such. In love; charity being the principle of all true holiness.

For they were predestinated or fore-ordained to be adopted as children of God by faith in Christ Jesus, and to be openly admitted to the privileges of that high relation to himself, notwithstanding their original and actual sinfulness, ver. 5. In doing this according to his sovereign will and pleasure, God exhibited the glory of his rich, free, and distinguishing grace, that its praises might be celebrated as by that glorious grace he had saved them, although sinners both of the jews and the gentiles, yet accepted in the beloved Son, so that the Father was well pleased with them for his sake, ver. 6. For when the purpose of God has begun to take effect, then as the children of God, who is love, we bear his image, and become followers of him. Thus the change wrought, as well as the mercy shown,

are to the praise of the glory of his grace. The reconciled and adopted believer, the pardoned sinner, gives all the praise of his salvation to his gracious Father. His actions as well as his words declare the praises of the Divine mercy.

Of the glory of his grace, ver. 6, Let this stir us up that we may endeavour to know more of God, and to view, as we may, the reflection of that infinite glory which we have in his word and works. How dull of heart are we, that we do not more seek to have the eyes of our minds wiped, that we may get some glimpse of it. We run after glorious sights on earth, but how would this glory delight us if we in any measure discerned it. What shall be our blessedness in heaven but to fix the eyes of our souls on this glory, that we may be transformed to the likeness of it? All the glory of this world is but like the shining of rotten wood, which seems bright for the night season, but is only rottenness itself as we see it by day. Let us all seek for God to take away the veil of our hearts, that we may even now, as in a mirror or glass, get some sight of this most rich glory.—(78)

Having been brought into union with Christ by faith, ver. 7, they obtained complete redemption; their sins being pardoned, and their souls set at liberty from their former wretched condition. This deliverance was according to the unspeakable abundance of God's free mercy and grace. His love appointed this method of redemption, spared not his own Son, brought them to hear and embrace this salvation. Thus great benefit, which comes freely unto us, was dearly bought by our blessed Lord: yet it is according to the riches of God's grace. Christ's satisfaction, and God's rich grace, are very consistent in the great affair of man's redemption. God was satisfied by Christ as our substitute and surety; but it was rich grace that would accept of a surety, when God might have executed the severity of the law upon the transgressor; and it was rich grace to provide such a surety as his own Son, and freely to deliver him up, when nothing of that nature could have entered our thoughts, or have been otherwise found out for us.

In manifesting such astonishing grace, in so abundant a manner, the Lord also acted with all wisdom and prudent

counsel, ver. 8. This method of grace gave no encouragement to evil, but showed sin in all its hatefulness, and how it deserved vengeance. It exhibited the Divine justice and holiness in tremendous glory, manifested all the attributes of God, furnished the most effectual motives for the believer's future obedience, and subverted Satan's empire of ungodliness and iniquity. And it is evident that a double wisdom and prudence were joined with unspeakable grace, in forming and executing the holy plan of man's free salvation; in securing the honour of God and his law, at the same time that the recovery of sinners and their salvation are ascertained and made sure!

5. The decree is made to depend upon God's calling, that it may be firm, but did it depend on perseverance in faith, left altogether in our liberty, it could not be firm, seeing it would depend on such a condition as is uncertain to the last breath.—*Baine*. See note Rom. 8. 31.

Ver. 9—14. The blessings which the apostle had mentioned were made known to believers by the Lord's communicating to them the mystery of his sovereign will, respecting the method of redemption and salvation; and the admission of sinners, by faith in Christ, whether Jews or Gentiles, according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in himself. Thus were they made to know the mystery of his will, and that in the dispensation, which at length, in the fulness of times had been introduced, the Lord meant to gather into one family, in, by, and under the rule of his Son, all things in heaven and in earth. But these mysteries of his will must have been for ever hidden from us, if God himself had not made them known to us by his written word, preached gospel, and Spirit of truth.

Jesus Christ is that person, in and by whom we are, by faith in Him, gathered together unto God, and to the angels; and also among ourselves by the grace of love. He united the two differing parties, God and man, in his own person, and satisfied justice for that wrong which caused the separation; he worked in us by his Spirit those graces of faith and love, whereby we are made one with God, and among ourselves; and has by his death taken away that partition and enmity which was between Jew and Gentile. It is necessary that we should be

in him by faith before we are united to God through him: the apostle declares this truth twice in this verse 10.—(79. f.)

By their relation to Christ, and union with him, the apostle and the Jewish converts obtained a share in this glorious inheritance; having been predestinated according to the decree and sovereign appointment of that glorious God who carried on his work of creation, providence, and redemption, according to those wise counsels, and that perfect plan which he has seen good to form. Thus, in every respect he dispenses his blessings, according to his good pleasure, which he hath purposed in himself. And if in executing his great design of gathering together in one, all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and in earth, he has brought us to seek and obtain an inheritance among his redeemed people; we must allow that we were "predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." His Divine teaching had led whom he pleased, to see the glory of those truths, which others were left to blaspheme. They were selected to the praise of his glory, by their being brought to trust in Christ for salvation, by the power of Divine grace, and as the first fruits of the Christian church; though in themselves as deserving of wrath as their Jewish brethren.

God sent the word of truth, the glad tidings of the gospel of salvation, to the believer, while others were left in darkness; he quickened the believer when others were left dead in sin; he enabled the believer, both Jew and Gentile, to trust in Christ, as well as sealed pardon by his sanctifying Spirit, as the earnest of a future glorious inheritance, ver. 14. The earnest is part of payment, and it secures the full sum. The gift of the Holy Ghost, all his influences and operations, both as a Sanctifier and a Comforter, are heaven begun, glory in the seed and bud. The Spirit's illumination is an earnest of everlasting light; sanctification is an earnest of perfect holiness; and his comforts are earnest of everlasting joys. He is said to be the earnest, until the redemption of the purchased possession. It may be called here the possession, because this earnest makes it as sure to the heirs as though

they were already possessed of it; and it is purchased for them by the blood of Christ. The redemption of it is mentioned, because it was mortgaged and forfeited by sin; and Christ restores it to us, and so is said to redeem it, in allusion to the law of redemption. Observe what a gracious promise that is, which secures the gift of the Holy Ghost to those who ask him.

It is the sanctifying and comforting influences of the Holy Spirit, which seal believers as the children of God, and heirs of heaven. These are the first fruits of holy happiness, and impress the holy image of God upon their souls. Thus they are preserved and supported during their time of trial and suffering, in life and in death, until at last put in possession of that complete redemption, which Christ has ensured to his purchased people; until at the resurrection of the dead they receive that inheritance which sin has forfeited, but which Christ purchased for them; and they should be for ever monuments to the praise of the glory of God. For this we were made, and for this we were redeemed; this is the great design of God, in all that he has done for us; unto the praise of his glory. He intends that his grace and power and other perfections should by this become conspicuous and illustrious, that the sons of men should magnify him.

14. All these things are so evidently distinguishing of true Christians, and so inapplicable to collective bodies of professors of Christianity; that we must conclude the apostle spoke of election, as gratuitous, as personal, and not as national; and of effectual calling as inseparably connected with eternal life. No ingenuity can make the apostle's words speak any other language, consistently with the rules of grammar and of common sense.—T. Scott.

Ver. 15-23. St. Paul earnestly prays in behalf of the Ephesians. We should pray for those for whom we give thanks. He gives thanks for spiritual blessings, and prays for further supplies. God has laid up these spiritual blessings for us in the hands of his Son the Lord Jesus; but has appointed us to draw them out, and fetch them in by prayer. We have no part or lot in the matter, any further than we claim it by faith and prayer. One inducement to pray for them, was, the good account of their faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, ver. 15.

Faith in Christ, and love to the saints, will be attended with all other graces. Love to the saints, as such, and because they are such, must include love to God. Those who love saints, as such, love all saints, however weak in grace, mean in the world, or even untoward; some of them may be. Another inducement to pray for them, was, because they had received the earnest of the inheritance; having received the earnest, it follows not that they are happy enough, and take no further care; quite the contrary. While he blesses God for giving them the Spirit, he ceases not to pray that God would give them greater measures of the Spirit, ver. 17. Even the best christians need to be prayed for: and while we hear well of christian friends, we should intercede for them, that they may abound and increase yet more and more.

St. Paul prays not that they might be freed from persecution, and possess the riches, honour, or the pleasures of the world; but for the enlightening of their understandings, and that their knowledge may increase and abound. He means practical and experimental knowledge. The graces and comforts of the Spirit are communicated to the soul by enlightening the understanding. Satan gets possession by the senses and passions. Christ by the understanding. Especially he entreats the God, whom the Lord Jesus Christ, as man, had worshipped and obeyed, even the glorious Father, the great Author of all that glory which is visible in the whole universe—that he would still more abundantly communicate to them the Holy Spirit, from whose influence all Divine wisdom was derived to men, and who revealed to the hearts of believers the certainty, nature, and glory of those truths, which he had revealed to the church by prophets and apostles. So that every veil of prejudice, pride, and sin being removed, they might more completely know God in Christ, and more confidently acknowledge their relation to him, ver. 17. We have the revelation of the Spirit in the word: but will that avail, if we have not the wisdom of the Spirit in the heart?

Even true believers greatly want heavenly wisdom. What is there in children from want of wisdom which is not in ourselves? They see not the end things work unto, thence they count

such things good as seem so to their senses. They think those love them who indulge them, not those who reprove, or hold them in. Thus we think it happiness to have what contents us, to be free from what is grievous to flesh or spirit. We think God does not love us when he frowns on us, and makes us drink a bitter draught day by day. Again, children are backward to what would do them good another day, and will part with things of future profit for present pleasure. Are not the best of us unwilling to come under God's yoke, though there is no other way to find rest for our souls? Do we not for a little pleasure often part with our peace? Also, children, for want of wisdom, forget the past correction when the smart is over, and fall to the same faults again, and is it not so with us? And as children and youth, through want of wisdom, speak and do many things full of folly, so we let fall, in word and in deed, many things in which wisdom is wanting. Let us then labour to find this want in ourselves, and to see our folly, that we may be made wise. The apostle also prays for the spirit of revelation. Do we not observe men weak of understanding and of godly wisdom, who see clearly and joyfully the things of their peace; yea the will of God in which they should walk; while men for conscience equal to them, for understanding and godly wisdom far before them, are enabled only with much ado to carry on their course in faith and obedience? For this what reason can be found but in this spirit of revelation, which shines far more brightly to the one than the other?—(76.)

Thus believers understand more clearly and experience more deeply, the value of that object of their hope to which God has called them by his gospel, ver. 18, and perceive what riches of grace, consolation, and spiritual blessings, are comprised in the glory which constitutes the inheritance conferred on the saints. And if we disputed less, and prayed more with, and for each other, we should daily see more and more what is the hope of our calling, and the riches of the Divine glory in this inheritance. There is a glory in this inheritance; riches of glory, rendering the christian more excellent and more truly honourable than all about him: and it is

necessary to know this experimentally; to be acquainted with the principles, pleasures, and powers of the spiritual and divine life. It may be understood of the glorious inheritance in or among the saints in heaven, where God, as it were, lays forth all his riches, to make them happy and glorious, and where all that the saints possess is transcendently glorious. As the knowledge of this which can be attained upon earth, is very desirable and delightful, let us endeavour then, by reading, contemplation, and prayer, to know as much of heaven as we can, that we may be desiring and longing to be there. The practical belief of the all-sufficiency of God, the omnipotence of Divine grace, is necessary to a close and steady walk with him, ver. 19. It is desirable to know experimentally the mighty power of that grace, beginning and carrying on the work of faith in our souls. It is difficult to bring a soul to believe fully in Christ, and venture its all upon his righteousness, and the hope of eternal life. Nothing less than an almighty power will work this in us. Also that they might perceive what exceeding greatness of Divine power had been exerted in their conversion, and was, still engaged to strengthen and defend them, to perfect their new creation, and to complete their redemption from Satan, sin, and death, according to the operation of that mighty power which was put forth in the resurrection and exaltation of Christ.

The apostle speaks with a mighty fluency and copiousness of expression, yet, at the same time, as if he wanted words to express the exceeding greatness of God's almighty power, that power which God exerts toward his people, and by which he raised Christ from the dead, ver. 20. That indeed was the great proof of the truth of the gospel to the world: but the transcript of that in ourselves, our sanctification, and rising from the death of sin, in conformity to Christ's resurrection, is the great proof to us. Some understand the apostle as here speaking of that exceeding greatness of power which God will exert for raising the bodies of believers to eternal life, even the same mighty power which he wrought in Christ when he raised him. And how desirable must it be to become at length

acquainted with that power, by being thereby raised out of the grave unto eternal life!

Having spoken of Christ and his resurrection, the apostle makes further honourable mention of the Lord Jesus and his exaltation. All the glory and all the powers of both worlds, are entirely devoted to him, ver. 21. For in consequence of Christ's resurrection he had been exalted in the human nature to the Father's right hand, far above all creatures, however dignified; not only above the princes of the earth, but was the destroyer of the powers of darkness. And far above the inhabitants of heaven, however distinguished as principalities and powers, yea, above every name that ever was or will be celebrated, on earth or in heaven.

The Father hath put all things under his feet, ver. 22, according to the promise, Psa. 110. 1. All creatures must yield sincere obedience, or fall under the weight of his sceptre. It was a gift to Christ, considered as Mediator, to be advanced to such dominion, and to such a mystical body prepared for him: and it was a gift to the church, to be provided with a Head, endued with so much power and authority. God gave him all power both in heaven and in earth. The Father loves the Son, and hath given all things into his hands. But what completes the comfort is, that he is the Head over all things to the church; he therefore disposes all the affairs of the kingdom of his providence in subservience to the designs of his grace concerning his church. But he is not complete in his mediatorial character, except in the preservation and full salvation of his mystical body; and while he fills heaven and earth with his glory, he fills his ordinances with his power and gracious presence, and dwells in every believer by his Spirit of life, purity, and love, condescending to deem them essential to his own fulness of glory; as every member of the body is to the completeness of the human nature.

Here is signified that it is Christ the Saviour, who supplies all the necessities of those who trust in him, and confers upon them all blessings in the richest abundance.—(95.)

By being partakers of Christ himself we come to be filled with the fulness of grace and glory in him, as by taking

the substance of earthly nourishments we have virtue from them. By obtaining him we come to partake of this life which flows from him. The further he dwells in us, the more he fills us. All fulness is from Christ. How then do they forget themselves who seek for righteousness out of him. They leave the well-head of all grace and glory, and dig cisterns which will not hold water. This teaches us to come to Christ. Shall we not press with reverence to this Lord of lords, who fills all in all with his spiritual blessings, and invites every one that thirsteth to come and drink the water of life freely? Did we know what we are called to, and what we might find in him, surely we should come and be suitors to him.—(76.)

When most sensible of our weakness and the power of our enemies, we shall most perceive and experience the greatness of that mighty power which has effected our conversion, and is engaged to perfect our salvation. The immensity of this love and condescension, and the vastness of our privileges, our unspeakable obligations, if duly apprehended, will constrain us by love to live to our Redeemer's glory; and thus our humble, holy, and cheerful lives will vindicate our doctrines from the calumnies of those who speak evil of things they understand not.

18. Hope is sometimes put for that grace itself, Rom. 5. 4, 5, and 15. 13; at other times for the object of it, Col. 1. 5, and Tit. 2. 13; and at others for the grounds of hope, Ezra 10. 2; Jer. 17. 12; Lam. 3. 29, and Rom. 4. 18. Perhaps all these senses may be taken here, though the two last seem principally intended.—*Gayse.*

19—23. The admirable beauty of this passage, and the strong emphasis and force of the expressions in the original, is scarcely to be paralleled in any other, and is superior to what our language can reach.—*Peckham.*

CHAPTER II.

The apostle, still further to magnify the riches of God's free grace towards the Ephesians, represents their deplorable state by nature, whether they were gentiles or jews, ver. 1—3. Shows what a happy change Divine grace had made in them, 4—10. And more fully to display this grace, especially toward the gentile part among them, he calls upon them to reflect upon their former state of heathenism, 11—13, and the exceeding great privileges and blessings they were brought into by the

gospel, equally with the believing jews, as one body with them, 14—22.

Ver. 1—3. Unregenerate souls are dead in trespasses and sins.—Sin is the death of the soul. Wherever that prevails, there is no spiritual life. Sinners are dead, being destitute of the principles and powers of spiritual life; and cut off from God, the Fountain of life; and are dead, as a condemned malefactor is said to be a dead man. It implies an utter incapacity for spiritual enjoyments and satisfactions, being destitute of desire after that happiness which holy creatures enjoy in the favour and service of God, and being unable to worship and obey him with love and delight, as a dead man is incapable of the business and pleasures of life. A man dead in trespasses and sins has no desire for spiritual pleasures.

When we look upon a corpse, it excites an awful feeling. Here, we are ready to reflect and say, dwell an immortal spirit, and a soul was once diffused throughout this frame. It has now fled and left nothing but the ruins of a man. Did we view things in a right light, we should be far more affected in contemplating a dead soul! The soul of man was once the abode of light and life. It is now overspread with carnality and darkness. It is now a lost, fallen spirit!—(38.)

A state of sin is a state of conformity to this world, in the outward conversation, ver. 2. Those who walk in trespasses and sins, according to the course of this world, walk according to the prince of the power of the air. Satan, or the prince of devils, is thus described. See Matt. 12. 24, 26. The apostate angels are as one power united under one chief; and therefore here spoken of as such. The air is represented as the seat of Satan's kingdom—there they abide; in that lower region he is at hand to tempt men, and to do as much mischief to the world as he can. Wicked men are slaves to Satan. The course and tenor of their lives accord with his suggestions; they are subject to him, and are led captive by him at his will, wherefore he is called the god of this world. The children of disobedience are such as disobey God, and serve the devil; in these he works powerfully and effectually. As the good Spirit works good in obedient

souls, so this evil spirit works evil in wicked men. He now works, even since the world has been blessed with the light of the glorious gospel. Or, "according to the prince of that spirit which now worketh." Satan is the author of that proud, carnal disposition which there is in ungodly men. His temptations first produced it in human nature; and he works upon it by evil spirits, to instigate to all wickedness, in thought, word, and deed; thus he rules up the hearts of men.

The apostle adds, Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past; these words refer to the jews, whom he signifies to have been in the like sad and miserable condition by nature, and to have been as vile and wicked as unregenerate gentiles, whose natural state he further describes.

We are by nature the children of wrath, even as others. The jews were so, as well as the gentiles, the christians as well as those who remained unconverted; and one man is as much so as another by nature; not only by custom and imitation, but from the time when we began to exist, and by our natural inclinations and appetites. In one way or other, we have all had our conversation among these children of disobedience, under Satan's influence, fulfilling the desires or wills of carnal minds, and on scripture grounds it is clear that whether men have been most prone to sensual or to spiritual wickedness, all men, being naturally children of disobedience, are also by nature children of wrath. God is angry with the wicked every day. Our state and course deserve wrath, and would end in eternal wrath, if Divine grace did not interpose. What reason have sinners then to seek earnestly for that grace which will make them, of children of wrath, children of God and heirs of glory!

1. The Ephesians were remarkable as a very abandoned people.

2. It was the notion of the jews, that there are noxious and accusing spirits who fly about in the air, and that there is no space between the earth and the firmament free, but the air is full of demons.—*Gill*.

Ver. 4.—10. The apostle gives an account of the glorious change wrought by converting grace. God himself is the Author of this great and happy change, and his great love is the spring of it.

Love is his inclination to do us good, considered simply as creatures; Mercy respects us as apostate and as miserable creatures. God's eternal love or good-will toward his creatures, is the fountain whence all his mercies vouchsafed to us proceed; and that love of God is great love, and that mercy of his is rich mercy; inexpressibly great, and inexhaustibly rich. Even when the apostle and his fellow-christians were dead in sin, unable to help themselves, and hateful in the sight of God, he loved them because he was rich in mercy, and delighted in exercising it. Thus he quickened them with Christ, in virtue of his resurrection, with life from him, and by the Holy Spirit. And then by grace ye are saved, ver. 5. Every converted sinner is a saved sinner; delivered from sin and wrath. The grace that saves, is, the free undeserved goodness and favour of God; and he saves, not by the works of the law, but through faith in Christ Jesus, by which they come to partake the great blessings of the gospel: and both that faith, and that salvation on which it has so great an influence, are the gift of God. God has ordered all so that the whole shall plainly appear to be of grace.

Grace in the soul is a new life in the soul. As death locks up the senses, seals up all the powers and faculties, so does a state of sin, as to all good; grace unlocks and enlarges the soul. A regenerated sinner becomes a living soul; he lives a life of holiness, being born of God; he lives, being delivered from the guilt of sin by pardoning and justifying grace. Those who were buried are raised up, ver. 6, in virtue of their union with Him whom God hath raised from the dead. When Christ was raised from the dead, he in effect raised up all believers together with him. And when he placed him at his right hand in heavenly places, he advanced and glorified them in and with him. And made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Sinners roll themselves in the dust; sanctified souls sit in heavenly places, are raised above the world, Saints, by Christ's grace, have ascended with him above this world to converse with another, and they live in the constant expectation of it. They are not only servants to the best of Masters in the best work, but are exalted to reign with him.

This had been done that in ages to come, in future generations, and in future worlds, the Lord might display the exceeding riches and abundance of his grace, by the astonishing kindness shown to vile sinners in Christ Jesus. So that men and angels, and all created intelligences, to eternity might behold, admire, and adore his glorious mercy and love.

The goodness of God in converting and saving sinners heretofore, is encouragement to others in after-time to hope in his grace and mercy. What may we not hope for from such grace and kindness, from riches of grace, and from exceeding riches of grace, to which this change is owing? They were brought into a state of full security, by the mere mercy of God, through faith in Christ. But even this faith, which effected their relation to him, was not of themselves, ver. 8. Our faith, our conversion, and our eternal salvation, are not the product of any abilities, or merit of our own; Not of works, lest any man should boast, ver. 9. These things are not brought to pass by any thing done by us, therefore all boasting is excluded. Our proud and carnal minds naturally are utterly averse to this humbling and spiritual doctrine—that all is the free gift of God, the effect of being quickened by his power.

Regenerated sinners themselves are God's workmanship, being created in Christ Jesus unto good works, ver. 10. All is of grace, all our spiritual advantages are from God. The new man is a new creature; and God is its Creator. In Christ Jesus, on the account of what he has done and suffered, and by the influence and operation of his blessed Spirit. Unto good works. God, in this new creation, has designed and prepared us for good works, that we should be fruitful in them. Wherever God by his grace implants good principles, they are to be for good works. Which God hath before ordained, decreed, and appointed. It was his purpose to which God prepared us, by blessing us with the knowledge of his will, and his Holy Spirit producing such a change in us; that we should glorify God by exemplary conversation, and perseverance in holiness. Let none suppose it is an unholy salvation; none can from scripture abuse this doctrine, or accuse it

of any tendency to licentiousness. All who so act are without excuse.

Ver. 11—13. Converted sinners ought to reflect upon the sinfulness and misery of the state they were in by nature. Gentiles in the flesh, lying in the corruption of their natures, called uncircumcision by that which is called the circumcision, reproached and upbraided by the formal Jews, who made an external profession, and who looked no further than the outward ordinance. Hypocritical professors value themselves chiefly on their external privileges, and reproach and despise others who are destitute of them.

At that time, while gentiles, and in an unconverted state, they were in a Christless condition, without knowledge of the Messiah, and without a saving interest in him, or relation to him. It is true of all unconverted sinners, all who are destitute of faith, that they have no saving interest in Christ; and it is deplorable for a soul to be without Christ. Being without Christ, they were aliens from the commonwealth of Israel; they did not belong to the visible church of God. It is no small privilege to be placed in the church of Christ, and to share in the advantages peculiar to it. They were strangers from the covenants of promise. The covenant of grace has ever been the same for substance; though, having various additions in the several ages of the church, it is called covenants; and the covenants of promise, because it is made up of promises, particularly of the Messiah, and eternal life through him. The Ephesians, in their gentile state, were strangers from this covenant; and all unregenerate sinners are strangers to it, as they have no interest in it. They had no hope beyond this life; no hope of spiritual and eternal blessings; for Christ and the covenant are the foundation of all the Christian's hopes. They were without God in the world; not without some general knowledge of a deity, for they worshipped idols; but living without due regard to God, any acknowledged dependence on him, and any special interest in him. The words are, atheists in the world; for though they worshipped many gods, yet they were without the true God.

Sad and terrible description this of

the state of heathens, but who is able to remove himself out of it? Would that this were not likewise a true description of many baptized in the name of Christ. Who can without trembling reflect upon the misery of a damned person, eternally separated from the people of God, cut off from the body of Christ, fallen from the covenant of promise, having no hope, no Saviour, and without any God but a God of vengeance, to all eternity? To have no part in Christ! What true christian can hear this without horror?—(94)

They were afar from Christ, from his church, from the promises, from the christian hope, and from God himself; therefore from all good; like the prodigal son in the far country. Unconverted sinners remove to a distance from God. But now in Christ Jesus, upon your conversion, by virtue of union with Christ, and interest in him by faith, you are made nigh. They were brought home to God, received into the church, taken into the covenant, and possessed of all other privileges consequent upon these. The saints are a people near to God. Salvation is far from the wicked: but God is a help at hand to his people; and this is by the sufferings and death of Christ. Every believer owes his nearness to God, and his interest in his favour, to the sacrifice of Christ, through whose atoning blood they were become a peculiar people and spiritual worshippers: surely our love and zealous obedience should be much increased if we, who once were so far off, are brought nigh by the blood of Christ.

Ver. 14—18. Here is an account of the great privileges converted jews and converted gentiles both receive from Christ. Those who were in a state of enmity are reconciled. Jesus Christ is our Peace, ver. 14. He made peace by the sacrifice of himself; and in every sense Christ was to be considered as their Peace, the author, centre, and substance of their reconciliation to God, and of their union with the jewish believers in one church. He broke down the middle wall of partition, the ceremonial law, called the partition-wall, by allusion to the partition in the temple, which separated the court of the gentiles from that which the jews only had liberty to enter.

Thus Christ abolished in his flesh the

enmity, ver. 15, of the ceremonial law, so removing the cause of enmity and distance between them. The legal ceremonies, here called the law of commandments contained in ordinances, because it enjoined a multitude of external rites and ceremonies, were done away by Christ, having their accomplishment in him. By taking those out of the way, he formed one church of believers, regenerated persons, whether jews or gentiles. Thus he made in himself of twain one new man. He framed both these parties into one new society, or body of God's people, uniting them to himself as their common Head; they being renewed by the Holy Ghost, and now concurring in a new way of gospel worship; so making peace between these two parties. Surely all believers should live together in harmony, as members of one body, and children of one family. For through the person, sacrifice, and mediation of Christ, sinners of all descriptions were allowed access to God, as a Father, and were brought with acceptance into his presence, with their worship and services, under the immediate teaching and influences of the Holy Spirit, as one with the Father and the Son in this great work of salvation, as well as in the unity of the Godhead.

Sin caused a quarrel between God and men, ver. 16. Christ came to bring it to an end, by reconciling both jew and gentile, collected and gathered into one body, to a provoked and a justly offended God; and this by the cross; or by the sacrifice of himself upon the cross; having slain the enmity thereby. He, being slain or sacrificed, slew the enmity between God and poor sinners.

Christ, who purchased peace on the cross, came, partly in his own person, as to the jews, who are here said to have been nigh; and partly in his apostles, whom he commissioned to preach the gospel to the gentiles, who are said to have been afar off. And preached peace, or published the terms of reconciliation with God, and of eternal life. When the messengers of Christ deliver his truths, he is said to preach by them; insomuch that he who receives them receives him; and he who despises them delivering his message, despises and rejects Christ himself.

The effect of this peace is the free

access both jews and gentiles have unto God, ver. 18. For through him, in his name, and by his mediation, God is become the common reconciled Father of both. The throne of grace is for us to come to; and liberty of approach is allowed us. Our access is by the Holy Spirit. Christ purchased for us leave to come to God; and the Spirit gives us a heart to come, and strength to come, grace to serve God acceptably.

Ver. 19—22. The Ephesians, on their conversion, having access to God, as well as the jews, and by the same Spirit, the apostle tells them, Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, ver. 19. They were now no longer what the jews accounted all nations beside themselves, strangers to God; but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God, members of the church of Christ, and having a right to all the privileges of it. The church is compared to a city, and every converted sinner is free of it. It is also compared to a house, and every converted sinner is one of the family; a servant, and a child in God's house. If experimentally acquainted with this way of access to our reconciled God, we are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God.

In ver. 20, the church is compared to a building; the apostles and prophets are the foundation of that building. They may be so in a secondary sense, Christ himself being the primary Foundation; but we are rather to understand it of the doctrine delivered by the prophets of the Old Testament, and the apostles of the New. It follows, Jesus Christ himself being the chief Corner-stone. In him both jews and gentiles constitute one church, and Christ supports the building by his power.

In whom all the building, fitly framed together, ver. 21. All believers being united to Christ by faith, and among themselves by christian charity, become a sacred society, in which there is much communion between God and his people, as in the temple; they worshipping and serving him, he manifesting himself unto them; they offering up spiritual sacrifices to God, and he dispensing his blessings and favours to them. Thus the building, for the nature of it, is a

temple, a holy temple; for the church is the place which God has chosen to put his name there; and it becomes such a temple, by grace and strength derived from himself, in the Lord. The universal church being built upon Christ, as the Foundation-stone, and united in Christ as the Corner-stone, at length is glorified in him as the Top-stone. In whom ye also are builded together, ver. 22. Not only the universal church is called the temple of God, but particular churches; and even every true believer is a living temple, is a habitation of God through the Spirit. God dwells in all believers now; they being become the temple of God through the operations of the blessed Spirit; and his dwelling with them now is an earnest of their dwelling with him to eternity. Let us then inquire whether we are builded on this foundation?—whether our hopes are fixed on Christ, according to the doctrine of his word?—whether we have devoted ourselves as a holy temple to God through him?—whether we are an habitation of God by the Spirit, are spiritually minded, and bring forth the fruits of the Spirit? Let us take heed not to grieve the holy Comforter. Let us desire his gracious presence, and his influences upon our hearts. Let us seek to discharge the duties assigned us to the glory of God.

19. The original words in this place rendered "strangers and foreigners," differ; the former being applied to a city or country, the latter to a family. The meaning is, that they all now have every privilege which the jews had, of being the people and family of God.—*Bloomfield*.

20. The strength of buildings lies in their angles; the corner-stone unites and compacts the different sides; the chief corner-stone is laid at the foundation, upon which the whole angle or quoin of the building rests, which is the principal support and use of the edifice. Now Christ is the chief corner-stone; the main stress of this spiritual building rests upon him, who by his death has united jews and gentiles, the two different constituent parts of it, into one compact, regular building and temple.—*Cham-dor*. It has been supposed that there is some architectural allusion here to the magnificent temple of Diana, at Ephesus.

CHAPTER III.

The apostle sets forth the dignity of his office in its relation to the gentiles, for which he suffered imprisonment, ver. 1, 2. His qualifications for it, 3—6, and call to it, 7, together with the noble purposes answered by it, 8—12. He offers up a comprehensive prayer for the Ephesians, 13—19. And

concludes with a glorious and suitable doxology, 20, 21.

Ver. 1-7. For having preached the doctrines of truth, for asserting that the great privileges of the gospel belong not only to the jews, but to believing gentiles also; for this the apostle was a prisoner, but a prisoner of Jesus Christ. As he suffered in his cause, and his sake, so he was the object of his special protection and care, while thus suffering for him. Paul adhered to Christ, and Christ owned him, when he was in prison. For you gentiles; the jews persecuted and imprisoned him, because he was the apostle of the gentiles, and preached the gospel to them. The ministers of Christ are to dispense his truths, however disagreeable to some, and whatever they may suffer for doing so.

God appointed him to the office, ver. 2. They could not but have heard of this, and that the gospel is the grace of God, because it is the gift of Divine grace to sinful men. All the gracious overtures it makes, and the joyful tidings it contains, proceed from the rich grace of God; it is the great instrument of the Spirit, by which God works grace in the souls of men. He was authorized and commissioned by God to dispense the doctrine of the gospel, chiefly for the service of the gentiles, to you-ward.

Of the revelation of this truth, he speaks, ver. 3-5. The bringing together of jews and gentiles in the gospel church was a great mystery; designed in the counsel of God before all worlds, but could not be fully understood for many ages, till the accomplishment expounded the prophecies of it. It is called a mystery, the time and manner and means by which it should be effected, were kept secret, till by immediate revelation God made them known to his servant. And it is called the mystery of Christ, because it was revealed by him, Gal. 1. 12; and because it relates so very much to him. Whereby, when ye read; or, Unto which attending, (and it is not enough for us to read the scriptures, unless we seriously consider and lay to heart what we read,) ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ; so as to perceive how God had fitted Paul to be an apostle to the gentiles, which might be to them

an evident token of his Divine authority. This mystery was not so fully and clearly discovered in the ages before Christ, as it was revealed unto the prophets of the New Testament. The conversion of the gentile world to the faith of Christ is a mystery we ought to bless God for. Who would have imagined that those who had been so long in the dark, and at so great a distance, should be enlightened with the marvellous light, and be made nigh? Nothing is too hard for Divine grace. We ourselves are interested in this; not only as we live in a time in which the mystery is revealed, but particularly as a part of the nations who in times past lived in gross idolatry, but are now enlightened with the everlasting gospel.

The mystery revealed is, ver. 6, that they should be joint-heirs with the believing jews, of the heavenly inheritance; and that they should be members of the same mystical body, be received into the church of Christ, and be interested in the gospel promises, as well as the jews: and particularly in that great promise of the gift of the Holy Spirit. And this in Christ, being united to Christ, in whom all the promises are yea and amen; by the gospel, preached to them; the great instrument by which God works faith in Christ. This was the great truth revealed to the apostle, that God would call the gentiles to salvation by faith in Christ, and that without the works of the law.

He says, Whereof I was made a minister, ver. 7. God supplied him for his work; and in the discharge suitably assisted him with all needful gifts and graces, by the effectual working of his power; in himself and also in great numbers to whom he preached; by which means his labours among them were successful. What God calls men to, he fits them for with an almighty power. An effectual working of Divine power attends the gifts of Divine grace. As God appointed Paul to the office, so he eminently qualified him for it, by a special revelation.

Ver. 8-12. The apostle states how he was employed. With respect to the gentiles, he preached to them the unsearchable riches of Christ, ver. 8. How humbly he speaks of himself. St. Paul, the chief of the apostles, calls himself

less than the least of all saints; having been a persecutor of the followers of Christ. What can be less than the least? To speak himself as little as could be, he speaks himself less than could be. Those whom God advances to honourable employments, he humbles, and makes low in their own eyes; and where God gives grace to be humble, there he gives all other needful grace. A faithful minister of Christ may be humble, and think humbly of himself, when he thinks and speaks highly of his sacred function. How highly he speaks of Jesus Christ; The unsearchable riches of Christ. There is a mighty treasury of mercy, grace, and love laid up in Christ Jesus. for Jews and gentiles. The riches of the gospel are here spoken of, as the riches Christ purchased for, and bestows upon all believers. Not provided for himself or for holy creatures, but purchased for sinners, for the ransom of their souls, which sufficed for all that ever had come or should come to him, and never could be exhausted or diminished. These give ample encouragement to our own hearts; and the deepest humiliation will not abate our confidence of hope, if we duly consider the power and love of the Redeemer. They are unsearchable riches; they are beyond our power fully to ascertain or compute; men could no otherwise have attained to the knowledge but by revelation. It was the apostle's business and employment to preach these unsearchable riches of Christ among the gentiles; and it was a favour he greatly valued; this special favour God had granted to such an unworthy creature as himself. Though many remain poor, and are not enriched with these riches; yet how great a favour to have them preached among us, to have an offer of them! and if we are not enriched with them, it is our own fault.

The apostle's employment was, to make known to the whole world, the fellowship of the mystery, that the gentiles, hitherto strangers to the church, shall be admitted into it—which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God; kept secret in his purpose who created all things by Jesus Christ, as John 1. 3. He saves the gentiles as well as the Jews. He is the common Creator; and we may conclude he is able to perform the work of their

redemption, seeing he was able to accomplish the great work of creation. The first creation, when God made all things out of nothing, and the new creation, whereby sinners are made new creatures by converting grace, are of God by Jesus Christ.

The apostle adds, To the intent that the manifold wisdom of God, in the works of creation and providence, should be still more known by the wonderful displays of it in the redemption of sinners. The holy angels, who look into the mystery of our redemption by Christ, could not but notice that among the gentiles is preached the unsearchable riches of Christ. And this is according to the eternal purpose, ver. 11, which God purposed to execute in and through Jesus Christ.

In whom we have boldness and access with confidence, ver. 12, knowing that we have such a Mediator between God and us, and such an Advocate with the Father. His riches are as unsearchable as ever, yet while angels adore the manifold wisdom of God in the redemption of his church, the ignorance of self-wise and carnal men deems the whole to be foolishness.

Ver. 13—21. The apostle seems to be more solicitous lest the believers should be discouraged and faint upon his tribulations, than for what he himself endured. To prevent this, he tells them, that his sufferings were their glory; and if duly considered, they ministered cause for glorying and for rejoicing; as this discovered the great esteem and regard God bore to them. Not only faithful ministers themselves, but their people also, have special cause for joy and glorying, when they suffer for the sake of dispensing the gospel. Observe to whom the apostle prays—to God, as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. I bow my knees. When we draw nigh to God, we should reverence him in our hearts, and express it in the most suitable behaviour and gesture. Having mentioned Christ, he cannot pass without speaking of his love, ver. 15. The universal church has dependence upon the Lord Jesus Christ. Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named. The saints in heaven, who wear the crown of glory, and saints on earth, who are going on in the work of

grace here. The apostle asks of God spiritual blessings, which are the best blessings, and the most earnestly to be sought and prayed for by every one, both for ourselves and for our friends.

1. Spiritual strength for the work in which we are employed, ver. 16. The inner man is the heart or soul. To be mightily strengthened, to be endued with a high degree of grace, and spiritual abilities for discharging duty, resisting temptations, enduring persecutions. And the apostle prays that this may be according to his glorious riches, answerable to that great abundance of grace, mercy, and power, which resides in God, and is his glory; add this by his Spirit, who is the immediate worker of grace in the souls of God's people. Strength from the Spirit of God in the inner man; strength in the soul; the strength of faith; to serve God, do our duty, and persevere in our christian course with vigour and cheerfulness. As the work of grace is begun, so it is carried on, by the blessed Spirit of God.

2. The indwelling of Christ in our hearts, ver. 17. Christ is always present with his people, by his gracious influences and operations. If the law of Christ be written in our hearts, and the love of Christ be shed abroad there, then Christ dwells there. Where his Spirit dwells, there he dwells; in the heart of the believer by the continual exercise of faith upon him. Faith opens the door of the soul, to receive Christ; faith admits him, and submits to him. By faith we are united to Christ.

3. The fixing of pious and devout affections in the soul. Many have some love to God, and to his servants, but it is gone presently. We should desire that good affections may be fixed in us; that we may be rooted and grounded in love; rooted as a tree in a deep and fertile soil, established as a building on a firm foundation. Being settled and established in the sense of God's love to them, would inspire them with more holy love to him, and to one another; secure them from turning aside, or becoming negligent, and render them stable and fruitful in their profession. And how very desirable to have a fixed sense of the love of God in Christ to our souls; so as to be able to say at all times, He has loved me!

4. For their experimental acquaint-

ance with the love of Jesus Christ. The more intimate acquaintance have with Christ's love to us, the more our love will be drawn out to him, and to those who are his, for his sake; That ye may be able, ver. 18, 19, more clearly to understand, and firmly to believe the wonderful love of Christ, which the saints understand in some measure, and shall understand more hereafter. We should desire to comprehend with all saints, to have as much knowledge as the saints are allowed to have in this world.

Observe how magnificently the apostle speaks of the love of Christ. By enumerating these dimensions, is signified the exceeding greatness of the love of Christ; the unsearchable riches of his love, Job 11. 8, 9. The breadth shows its extent to all nations and ranks; the length its continuance from everlasting to everlasting; the depth, its stooping to the lowest condition, to relieve and save those who are sunk into the depths of sin and misery; the height, its entitling, and raising us up to heavenly happiness and glory. We should desire to comprehend this love: it is the character of all the saints that they do so; for they all have complacency and confidence in the love of Christ. And to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, ver. 19. If it passes knowledge, how can we know it? We must pray and endeavour to know something, and strive to know more of this love, though, after all, none can fully comprehend it: for in its full extent it passeth knowledge. Though the love of Christ may be better perceived and known by christians than it generally is, yet it cannot be fully understood on this side heaven.

5. He prays that they might be filled with all the fulness of God. It is a high expression: we should not dare to use it if we did not find it in the scriptures. We are to understand it of his fulness as a God in covenant with his people; such a fulness as God is ready to bestow, who is willing to fill every one to the utmost of his capacity, and that with all those gifts and graces which he sees they need. Those who receive grace for grace from Christ's fulness, may be said to be filled with the fulness of God, according to their capacity: all which is in order to their arriving at the highest degree of the

knowledge and enjoyment of God, and entire conformity to him.

O fulness, O all the fulness of God, to which man is designed and appointed, and which is the end of all the designs of God, and of the mysteries of Christ, art not thou able to satisfy men? Must he needs fill himself with a thousand trifles, imagining thereby to complete his happiness.—(94.)

18, 19. Let any one weigh well the import of these expressions; let him compare them with similar language in other parts of scripture; and let him then seriously consider whether such language can be applied to any mere creature.—*J. P. Smith.*

19. The sum of this is—As I have wished you the strength of the Spirit, and the lively sight of Christ's love, so I wish that you, who, though you have received grace in part, yet are in part empty, may be further and further filled with the graces of God's Spirit, till you come to all the fulness thereof.—*Haine.*

Ver. 20, 21. The apostle closes with adoration. It is proper always to conclude prayers with praises. Our blessed Saviour has taught us to do so. He is a God able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think. There is a fulness of grace and mercy in God, which the prayers of all the saints can never exhaust. They might stretch their thoughts, enlarge their desires, and multiply their petitions to the utmost. Whatever we may ask, or think to ask, still God is able to do more, exceedingly abundantly more. We may encourage our faith by considering his all-sufficiency and almighty power. According to the power which worketh in us. The power that still worketh for the saints, is according to the power that has wrought in them. Wherever God gives of his fulness, he gives to experience his power:

Having thus described God, the apostle ascribes glory to him. Therein we ascribe all perfections to him, glory being the effulgency and result of all. The seat of God's praises is in the church. That little return of praise which God receives from this world, is from the church, a sacred society constituted for the glory of God, every member of which is to concur in praising God. The Mediator of these praises is Jesus Christ. All God's gifts come from him to us through Christ; and through him all our praises pass from us to God. Let us then earnestly desire that

the Lord would grant unto us that we may be strengthened with might by his Spirit in all the graces of the new man. That our hearts may be made the throne and temple of the Lord Jesus; that in the daily exercise of faith we may enjoy his presence, and experience his consolations, become more entirely devoted to his service, and fruitful in every good work. Let us enlarge our expectations, and multiply our supplications, encouraged by what he has already done for our souls, being assured that the conversion of sinners, and the comfort of believers will be to his glory by Christ Jesus, through the ages of eternity. And God should and will be praised thus throughout all ages, world without end: for he will ever have a church to praise him, and he will ever have his tribute of praise from his church. Amen. So be it! And so it will certainly be.

CHAPTER IV.

In this, as in most others of St. Paul's epistles, the former part is doctrinal, and fitted to inform the minds of men in the great truths and doctrines of the gospel; the latter is practical, and designed for the direction of their lives and manners. In what has gone before, we have heard of christian privileges, the matter of our comfort. In what follows, we hear of christian duties, and what the Lord requires of us; to whom such privileges are vouchsafed.

The apostle excites by weighty arguments to mutual forbearance and union, 1—6. To a due use of spiritual gifts and graces for edification, 7—16. To purity and holiness in heart and life, 17—24. And to take heed of several sins practised among the heathen, inconsistent with their christian profession, 25—32.

Ver. 1—6. The apostle exhorts to mutual love, unity, and concord. Nothing is pressed more earnestly in the scriptures than this—to walk as becomes those called to Christ's kingdom and glory. He urges upon them lowliness and meekness, long-suffering, and forbearing one another in love, ver. 2. By lowliness understand humility, which is opposed to pride. By meekness, that excellent disposition of soul, which makes men unwilling to provoke and not easily to be provoked or offended; it is directly opposed to angry resentment and peevishness. Long-suffering

implies the patient bearing of injuries. Forbearing one another in love, signifies bearing others' infirmities out of a principle of love: so as not to cease to love them on the account of these. The best christians have need to bear one with another; and to stir up one another's graces, and not their passions. We find much in ourselves, which it is hard to forgive ourselves; therefore we must not be surprised if we find that in others, which we think hard to forgive them; yet we must forgive them as we forgive ourselves. Without these things unity cannot be preserved. The first step towards unity is humility; without that there will be no meekness, no patience or forbearance; and without these no unity. Pride and passion make the mischief. Humility and meekness restore the peace, and keep it. We do not walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called, if we are not meek and lowly in heart: for He by whom we are called, he to whom we are called, was eminent for meekness and lowliness of heart, and has commanded us therein to learn of him.

The seat of christian unity is in the heart or spirit; it does not consist in one set of thoughts, or in one form of worship, but in one heart and one soul. This unity of heart and affection is wrought by, and is one of the fruits of the Spirit. This we should endeavour to keep. Endeavouring is a gospel word. We must do our utmost. If others will quarrel with us, we must take all possible care not to quarrel with them. If others despise and hate us, we must not despise and hate them. In the bond of peace. A peaceable disposition and conduct bind christians together; whereas discord and quarrels disunite hearts and affections. The bond of peace is the strength of society. Not that it can be imagined that all believers should be in every thing just of the same opinions, and the same judgment; but the bond of peace unites them all together. As in a bundle of sticks, they may be of different lengths, and different strength; but when tied together by one bond, they are much stronger than the thickest and strongest were by themselves.

The whole church is one body, of which every believer is a member, and Christ the Head; this body is animated, as it were, by one life or soul,

even the omnipresent Spirit of Christ; all believers were called to hope for the same eternal happiness, on the same ground of God's word, warranted by the same experience of his converting grace, ver. 4. Hope is here put for its object, the thing hoped for, the heavenly inheritance, to the hope of which we are called. All believers are called to the same hope of eternal life. There is one Christ that they all hope in, and one heaven that they are all hoping for; and therefore they should be of one heart. They had all one Lord, Ruler, Protector, and Judge, under whom they had their several employments allotted. They had all one faith, both as to its object, author, nature and efficacy. They all believed the same doctrines as to the great essentials of religion; they had all been admitted into the church by one baptism, with water, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, as the sign of regeneration, ver. 5. They were all, whether jews or gentiles, become the worshippers of one God, even the Father of all, who is infinitely above all creatures, and through all, by his providence upholding and governing them; and in them all, through his Christ and Holy Spirit, being personally distinct from the Son and the Holy Ghost, yet mysteriously one with them. In all believers, in whom he dwells, as in his holy temple, by his Spirit and special grace. Let us then persevere in seeking and praying for the peace of the church, for blessed are the peace-makers, since they shall be called the children of God.

5. This text is not liable to the interpretation the romanists would put upon "one faith," since this one faith refers only to these doctrines which the whole church of Christ, for many centuries, received as things necessarily to be believed in order to salvation.—See *Philly*.

—We have all the same badge of christian profession. Let not every small matter prevail more to disjoin us, than this badge of christian profession to unite us in affection.—*Baine*.

6. We deny not that God the Father is One God over all, or that there is one who is both One God, and the Father; only we add, that there is also one, who is One God of the same essence, and the Son; and so also say we of the Holy Spirit. And that as the one Lord, and the one Spirit here, do not exclude the Father from being both Lord and Spirit; so neither does the One God and Father, exclude the Son or Holy Spirit, from being God, but only from being God the Father.—*Whitby*.

Ver. 7-16. Consider the variety of gifts Christ has bestowed among

his people. Though the members of Christ's church agree in many things, yet there are some wherein they differ: but this should cause no difference of affection among them; since they are all derived from the same bountiful Author, and designed for the same great ends. Unto every believer is given grace, some gift of grace, for their mutual help. All was given in such a measure as seemed best to Christ to bestow upon every one. The ministers, and all the members of Christ, owe all the gifts and graces they are possessed of to him: and all to whom Christ has given grace, and on whom he has bestowed his gifts, ought to love one another.

The apostle specifies some gifts which Christ bestowed. And that they were bestowed by Christ, he makes appear by those words of David, wherein he prophesied of the ascension of Christ, and the apostle descants upon it. Let us set ourselves to think of the ascension of Jesus Christ. That our blessed Redeemer, being risen from the dead, is gone to heaven, where he sits on the right hand of the Majesty on high, which completed the proof of his being the Son of God. Christ, when he ascended into heaven, as a triumphant Conqueror, led captivity captive. It is a phrase signifying a conquest over enemies, all our spiritual enemies. He conquered those who had conquered us; sin, the devil, and death. He triumphed over these on the cross; but the triumph was completed at his ascension. And he gave gifts unto men; in Psalm 68. 18, it is, He received gifts for men. He received for them, that he might give to them a large measure of gifts and graces; particularly, he enriched his disciples with the gift of the Holy Ghost. He descended first, ver. 9. He descended to the earth in his incarnation. He descended into the earth in his burial. He that descended, is the same that ascended up, ver. 10, far above the visible heavens that he might fill all things; all the members of his church, with gifts and graces suitable to their several conditions and stations.

At his ascension, Christ gave some, apostles, ver. 11. All of them were solemnly and publicly confirmed, by his visible pouring forth of the Holy Ghost in an extraordinary manner and measure upon them. The great gift that

Christ gave to the church at his ascension, was that of the ministry of peace and reconciliation. The gift of the ministry is the fruit of Christ's ascension, And ministers have their various gifts, all given by the Lord Jesus.

The officers which Christ gave to his church, were extraordinary ones; apostles, prophets, and evangelists. And there are ordinary ministers, employed in a narrower sphere; as pastors and teachers. How rich is the church that had at first such a variety of officers, and has still such a variety of gifts! The gifts of Christ were for the good of his church, and in order to advance his kingdom and interest among men. All are for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, ver. 12; that they might dispense the doctrines of the gospel, and successfully discharge the several parts of their ministerial function. For the edifying of the body of Christ, to build up the church, Christ's mystical body, by increase of their graces, and addition of new members. The saints will not be perfected, until all true believers meet together, by means of the same precious faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, ver. 13. Not a bare speculative knowledge, or acknowledging Christ to be the Son of God, and the great Mediator; but such as is attended with honour, trust, and obedience. Unto a perfect man, to our full growth of gifts and graces, free from the childish infirmities we are subject to in the present world. Unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ, so as to be christians of full maturity and ripeness in all the graces derived from Christ's fulness. Or, according to the measure of that stature which is to make up the fulness of Christ, which is to complete his mystical body. There is a fulness in Christ, and a fulness to be derived from him; and a certain stature of that fulness, and a measure of that stature assigned in the counsel of God to every believer; we never come to that perfect measure till we come to heaven. God's children are growing, as long as they are in this world.

Believers should not be like children in knowledge and experience; through want of firmness and judgment, and weakness of faith, liable to be tossed to and fro, as ships by the waves of

the sea; or carried about like clouds with the wind, by false and pernicious doctrines devised of men, and set forth by plausible reasonings and pretences. The best protection against such, is, to study the sacred oracles, and pray for the enlightening of the Spirit of Christ, that we may know the truth as it is in Jesus, and be established in it. Love is an excellent thing; but we must be careful to preserve truth with it. Truth is an excellent thing; yet we must speak it in love, not in contention. These two should go together—truth and peace. We should grow up into Christ in all things. Into Christ, so as to be more deeply rooted in him. In all things, in knowledge, love, faith, and all the parts of the new man. We should grow up toward maturity, which is opposed to the being children. Those are improving christians, who grow up into Christ. The more we grow into acquaintance with Christ, faith in him, love to him, dependence upon him, the more we shall flourish in every grace. He is the Head, and the christian's growth tends to the glory of Christ.

We should help one another, ver. 16. Here is a comparison between the natural body and that body of which Christ is the Head. As there must be mutual communications of the members of the body, in order to their growth and improvement, so there must be mutual love and unity, together with their proper fruits, among christians, in order to their spiritual improvement and growth in grace. From whom, that is, from Christ their Head, who conveys influence and nourishment to every particular member, the whole body of christians fitly joined together, and compacted, being firmly united among themselves, every one in his proper place and station, by that which every joint supplies, by the assistance every part thus united, gives to the whole. According to the power of Christ, who, as Head, influences and enlivens every member, with effectual operation by his Spirit, according to his appointed measure in every part; and, according to the state and exigence of every part, makes increase of the body. Particular christians receive their gifts and graces from Christ for the sake and benefit of the whole body. Unto the edifying of itself in love, Mutual love among christians

promotes spiritual growth; it is in love that the body edifies itself; a kingdom divided against itself cannot stand.

The more a man finds himself inclined and drawn out to improve in his station and according to his measure, all that he has received, whether of saving graces or common gifts, to the spiritual advantage of others, and chiefly for the common good of the whole body, he may the more certainly conclude that he has the grace of sincere love and charity rooted in his heart, and is actuated by it; for love is the impelling cause whereby the members improve all they have received for promoting the edification of the whole church.—(79. f.)

9. As Christ's ascending contains every thing that relates to his glorification; so his descending may be considered as including, not only his incarnation and burial, but the whole state of his humiliation upon earth. And as his descending is inferred from his ascending, this is founded on his being God, originally from above, as he said himself, John 3. 13.—*Geyer*.

11. "This passage establishes the protestant doctrine concerning the fulness and perpetuity of the holy scriptures, in all necessary articles of christian faith.—Since these apostles, prophets, and evangelists were only given in the first ages of the church, it evidently follows, that the persons mentioned in this text were not given to do this personally to the world's end, but only to do it by the doctrine they then taught."—*Hutty*. "It is thought that persons designated by the word rendered pastors, were those who had the more important pastoral charges in cities and large towns, and those designated as teachers, the smaller ones."—*See Theodoret. Bloomfield*. From the whole it may be observed, that as there have been various officers and offices in the gospel dispensation, various gifts have been bestowed; and these are the gifts of Christ, which he has received for men, and given unto them; and hence it appears that the work of the ministry is not a human invention, but the appointment of Christ, for which he fits and qualifies, and is therefore to be regarded; and that they only are the ministers of Christ, whom he makes ministers of the New Testament, and not whom men or themselves make and appoint."—*Gill*.

12. This means "for the complete edification and perfection of christians, by fully instructing them in the gospel."—*Bloomfield*. The stop after the word saints should be omitted. Some consider this intimates that the Lord gave the miraculous gifts to the first ministers of the word, that they might be enabled to fit the saints for the ordinary and permanent offices in the church. Thus they would, by their labours and writings, be instrumental in building up the church, till all her members were fully instructed in the faith, and entirely conformed to the image of Christ.—*Davidson*.

16. "Compacted through every joint, according to the effectual working of the nourishment supplied, in the measure of every part."—*Scholerfield*.

Ver. 17—24. The apostle charged the Ephesians in the name and by the authority of the Lord Jesus, that they should not henceforth, having professed the gospel, conduct themselves as the unconverted gentiles, who walked in the vanity of their mind, their vain speculations and carnal affections concurring to influence them to choose and pursue worldly vanities as their chief good. Converted gentiles must not live as unconverted gentiles. Though they live among them, they must not live like them. Here is described the wickedness of the gentile world, out of which regenerate christians were snatched as brands out of the burning.

Do not men, on every side of us, walk in the vanity of their minds? Must not we then insist upon the distinction between real and nominal christians? Their understandings were darkened, ver. 18. They were void of all saving knowledge; ignorant of many things concerning God, which the light of nature might have taught them. They sat in darkness, and they loved it rather than light. They had dislike and aversion to a life of holiness, which is not only the way of life God requires and approves, and by which we live to him, but which resembles God himself in his purity, righteousness, truth, and goodness. God made himself known to them by his works, but their ignorance proceeded from their obstinacy, and the hardness of their hearts; they resisted the light and rejected all the means of illumination and knowledge.

Their consciences were stupified and seared, ver. 19. They had no sense of sin, or of their misery and danger; whereupon they indulged in their filthy lusts; and, yielding to the dominion of these, became slaves of sin and the devil; making it their common practice to commit even unnatural and monstrous sins, and that with insatiable desires. When men's consciences are once seared, there are no bounds to their sins. When they set their hearts upon the gratification of their lusts, what can be expected but the most abominable sensuality and horrid enormities?

Christians must distinguish themselves from such, ver. 20. Those who have learned Christ, are saved from the darkness and defilement others are under. It is a good argument against

sin, that we have not so learned Christ, so learned christianity—the doctrines of Christ, and the rules of life prescribed by him. Not so, as to do as others do. If so be, or since, that ye have heard him, ver. 21, have heard his doctrine preached, and have been taught by him, inwardly and effectually, by his Spirit. Ye have been taught the real truth, as held forth by Christ himself, both in his doctrine and in his life. The truth of Christ appears in its beauty and power, when it appears as in Jesus.

In ver. 22, 24, are metaphors taken from garments. The principles, and dispositions of the soul must be changed, before there can be a change of life. There must be sanctification. 1. The old man must be put off. The corrupt nature is called a man; like the human body, it consists of divers parts, supporting and strengthening one another. It is the old man, we derived it from old Adam; we brought it into the world with us. It is corrupt; sin in their soul is the corruption of its faculties; and where it is not mortified, it grows daily worse, and tends to destruction. Sinful inclinations and desires are deceitful lusts; they promise men happiness, but render them more miserable; and betray them into destruction, if not subdued and mortified. These therefore must be put off, as an old garment, a filthy garment; they must be subdued and mortified. These lusts prevailed during their state of unregeneracy and heathenism.

It is not enough to shake off corrupt principles; we must be actuated by gracious ones. It is not enough to cease to do evil; but we must learn to do well. Be renewed in the spirit of your mind, ver. 23; have the mind, which is a spirit, renewed more and more by the power of Divine grace into the humble, spiritual, holy, and loving mind of Christ. And that ye put on the new man, ver. 24. By the new man, is meant the new nature, the new creature, actuated by a new principle, even regenerating grace enabling a man to lead a new life; that life of righteousness and holiness which christianity requires. This new man is created, or produced, by God's almighty power, whose truly excellent and beautiful workmanship it is. After God; in imitation of him, and in conformity to him. The loss of God's image upon the soul, was both the sinfulness and misery

of man's fallen state; and that resemblance which it bears to God, is the beauty, the glory, and the happiness of the new creature. In righteousness toward men, including all the duties of the second table; and in holiness toward God, signifying sincere obedience to the commands of the first table. The holiness of truth, true holiness, in opposition to the outward and ceremonial holiness of the jews. We are said to put on this new man, when, in the use of all God's appointed means, we seek after the divine nature, the new creature.

Ver. 25—28. Notice the particulars wherewith we should adorn our christian profession. 1. Take heed of lying. Of this sin the heathen were very guilty; therefore the apostle exhorts them to cease from every thing contrary to truth. Let them no longer flatter or deceive others. It is the character of God's people, that they are children who will not lie, who dare not lie, who hate and abhor lying. All who have grace, make conscience of speaking the truth, and would not tell a deliberate lie for the greatest gain and benefit to themselves. Truth is a debt we owe one another; if we love one another, we shall not deceive or lie one to another. We belong to the same society or body, which falsehood and lying tend to dissolve; therefore we should avoid that, and speak truth. Lying is a great sin; a peculiar violation of the obligations christians are under, very hurtful to christian society.

2. Take heed of anger and ungoverned passions. Be ye angry, and sin not, ver. 26. If ye have just occasion to express displeasure at what is wrong, to reprove sin and so to be angry, at any time, see that it be without sin. We should be more jealous for the glory of God, than for any interest or reputation of our own, and desirous to benefit the offender as well as others. One great and common sin in anger, is, to suffer it to burn into wrath, but if ye have been provoked, and your spirits decomposed; if ye have bitterly resented any affront that has been offered; before night, calm and quiet your spirits, seek the forgiving grace of Christ, and soon be reconciled to the offender. Let not the sun go down upon your wrath, let not the day close without forgiving and praying for those who have offended. If it burn

into wrath and bitterness of spirit, see to it that you suppress it. Neither give place to the devil, ver. 2: those who will persist in sinful anger and wrath, let the devil into their hearts, and suffer him to gain on them.

In violent anger the devil is tempting us; and when giving way to anger or nourishing hatred, we are yielding to his temptation.—(75.)

Also we give place to the devil by communing with him, when we plead for what God forbids; when the first motions of sin are not grievous to our souls; when we consent to them; when we accomplish them; when we repeat an evil deed and continue in a course of sin. This therefore must teach us that as sin yielded unto letteth in the devil upon us, we are to resist it as the devil himself, abstaining from all appearance of evil.—(76.)

3. Let him that stole, steal no more, ver. 28. It is a caution against all manner of wrong-doing, by force or fraud. But we must not only take heed of the sin, but conscientiously abound in the opposite duty; labour, working with our hands the thing that is good. Idleness makes thieves. Those who will not work, expose themselves greatly to temptations to thievery. Men should be diligent and industrious, not in any unlawful way, but in some honest calling. Working the thing which is good. Industry, in some honest way, will keep people out of temptation of doing wrong. Men ought to be industrious, that they may be capable of doing some good; as well as that they may be preserved from temptation. They must labour not only that they may live honestly, but that they may distribute to the wants of others. Even those who get their living by labour should be charitable out of their little. What then must we think of those called christians, who grow rich and live in luxury by frauds, oppressions, and deceitful contrivances? And if even the poor is to give to him that needeth, what is to be said to those whose large incomes and great expenditure or hoardings bear no proportion to their scanty givings? Observe further, alms likely to be acceptable to God, must not be the produce of unrighteousness and robbery, but of honesty and industry. God hates robbery for burnt-offerings.

Ver. 29—32. We are warned against corrupt communication ; and directed to what is useful and edifying, ver. 29. Filthy words and discourse proceed from and prove corruption in the speaker, and corrupt the minds and manners of others who hear ; christians should beware of all such discourse. We must not only put off corrupt communication, but put on that which is good, to the use of edifying. The great use of speech is to edify those with whom we converse. Christians should endeavour to promote useful conversation ; that it may minister grace unto the hearers ; that it may be good for, and acceptable to, the hearers ; either as information, counsel, pertinent reproof, or the like. It is the great duty of christians to take care that they improve converse for the good of others, seeking, by the blessing of God, to bring persons to serious reflection, or to encourage and warn believers. In watching against grieving the Spirit, let them put away all inward resentment and displeasure against others ; big words loud threatenings, and intemperate speeches—christians should not entertain vile passions in their hearts, nor be clamorous with their tongues. Evil speaking signifies all reproachful speeches. And malice is that routed anger which prompts men to design and to do mischief to others.

The contrary to all this follows ; Be ye kind one to another. This implies the principle of love in the heart, and the outward expression of it, in an affable, humble, courteous behaviour and carriage. Tender-hearted ; merciful, having a tender sense of the distresses and sufferings of others. Occasions of difference will happen among Christ's disciples ; they must be ready to forgive ; resembling God himself, who for Christ's sake hath forgiven them infinitely more than they can forgive one another. With God there is forgiveness ; and he forgives sin for the sake of Jesus Christ, and on account of the atonement he has made to Divine justice. Those who are forgiven of God, should be of a forgiving spirit, and should forgive even as God forgives, sincerely and heartily, readily and cheerfully, universally and for ever.

Mark how God's forgiveness causes us to forgive. The thousands remitted unto us, should make us willing to

forgive others. As a wall casts heat to those who stand by when the hot beams of the sun rest upon it, so we reflect pardon upon others when the beams of God's pardon shine on our hearts. We must thank God for all the fruits of love our brethren show to us ; none can love his brother truly that loveth not God ; none can love God but those first loved of him. And this teaches us what we must do when our love is cold, not ready to forgive. Look at God ; our hearts, frozen in regard to love, cannot be helped better than with standing in the flames of God's grace towards us. If we look how God has forgiven us, we shall find that He has forgiven us many sins in number, great ones in nature. He has freely done it ; though it cost Christ dear, we have it freely, and he has done it perfectly. This teaches us that we must labour even thus to forgive ; and this is the more to be marked, as it answers all objections which would make us hang back in this duty. God forgives us, though we have no cause to sin against him. He has forgiven many, very many times. He saw we should often sin against him, yet he forgave. We must forgive as he has forgiven us.—(76.)

In the midst of these exhortations and cautions we find interposed a general one ; And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, ver. 30. By looking to what precedes, and to what follows, we may see what it is that grieves the Spirit of God. In the verses before, it is intimated, that all lying, and corrupt communications that stir up filthy appetites and lusts, grieve the Spirit of God. In what follows it is intimated, that corrupt passions of bitterness, wrath, anger, clamour, evil-speaking, and malice, grieve this good Spirit. That blessed Being cannot be grieved or vexed as we are ; but the design of the exhortation is, that we must not do what is contrary to his holy nature and his will. We must not refuse to hearken to his counsels, nor rebel against his government ; to provoke him to act towards us, as men do toward those with whom they are displeased and grieved ; withdrawing themselves and their wonted kindness from such, and abandoning them to their enemies. O provoke not the holy blessed Spirit of God to withdraw his presence and his

gracious influences from you! all hope, wisdom, strength, and joy are from him. Because by him we are sealed unto the day of redemption. There is to be a day of redemption; the body is to be redeemed from the power of the grave at the resurrection day; then God's people will be delivered from all the effects of sin, as well as from all sin and misery; which they are not, till rescued out of the grave: then their full and complete happiness begins. All true believers are sealed to that day. God has distinguished them from others, having set his mark upon them: he gives them the earnest and assurance of a joyful and a glorious resurrection: and the Spirit of God is the seal. Wherever that blessed Spirit is as a Sanctifier, he is the earnest of all the joys and glories of the redemption-day; and we should be undone, should God take away his Holy Spirit from us.

That we are cautioned not to grieve Him is an evidence that his work proceeds from and is wholly managed in love. This teaches us with what love and compassion, with what tenderness and holy delight, he performs his work in us and towards us. This is to be fixed as an important principle in this part of the mystery of God, that the principal foundation of the undertaking this office of a Comforter, by the Holy Spirit, is his own peculiar and ineffable love.—(52.)

30. This is one of the passages which, ascribing personal action or passion to the Holy Spirit, with the article prefixed, are usually adduced to prove the personality of the blessed Spirit.—*Valpy*.

CHAPTER V.

The apostle concludes his exhortation to brotherly love, ver. 1, 2. Repeats his caution against several sins, particularly against all uncleanness, covetousness, and drunkenness, with a variety of arguments to enforce his cautions, 3—14. He directs to a contrary behaviour, and exhorts to the relative duties of society in general, 15—21. He exhorts wives and husbands in particular, and their duties are illustrated and enforced by the spiritual relation between Christ and the church, 22—33.

Ver. 1, 2. The apostle has been insisting on mutual love, or christian charity, in the former chapter, to which the particle 'therefore' refers. Because

God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven you, *therefore* be ye followers of God, imitators of him. Practical religion is the imitation of God. Resemble him in every grace, especially in his love and pardoning goodness. As dear children, as becomes the children of God, who are beloved by their heavenly Father.

And walk in love, ver. 2. This grace should be the principle from which we act, it should direct the ends at which we aim in all that we do.

In Christ's sacrifice his love triumphs, and Paul invites us to contemplate it, and consider all its circumstances. It is himself, not a part of himself that he sacrifices, as a living victim which suffers pain and death. He offers up himself as the true and only Priest of his sacrifice, not from any necessity, but freely giving himself; not to strange gods, but to his God, and Father. Not for holy and innocent persons, but for the sinful and wicked; not for his friends, but his enemies, a pure, holy, and innocent victim, such as is worthy of God. Offer us up with thyself, holy and adorable Victim, and cause us to enter into thy dispositions and the spirit of thy sacrifice.—(94.)

Ver. 3—14. Filthy lusts must be suppressed, in order to the supporting of holy love. Or covetousness; immoderate desire of gain, insatiable love of riches, is spiritual adultery: for by this, the soul goes astray from God, therefore carnal worldlings are called adulterers. The conversation of those who speak as if every thing was valuable in proportion as money can be got or saved by it, corrupts the judgments and principles of men as effectually as filthy discourse, though in another way, and is really as inconsistent with godliness. These sins must be dreaded and detested in the highest degree. Let it not be once named among you, without abhorrence, as becometh saints, holy persons, separated from the world, and dedicated unto God. The apostle not only cautions against gross acts of sin, but against what some may make light of, and think excusable.

Neither filthiness, ver. 4. By which understand all unseemly gestures and behaviour. Nor foolish talking, licentious discourse; or such vain discourse as betrays folly and indiscretion, and

is far from edifying the hearers. Nor jesting; the context points to such offensive jesting, or discourse, as is filthy. These things are not convenient. They are so far from being profitable, that they pollute and poison the hearers. These things do not become christians, and are very unsuitable to such a character.

But rather giving of thanks: so far let the christian's mirth be from evil and profane wit, let him be cheerful, by a grateful remembrance of God's goodness and mercy, and by blessing and praising him on account of these. Our cheerfulness should express itself as becomes christians, in what may tend to God's glory. If men abounded more in good and pious expressions, they would not be so apt to utter unbecoming words.

Several arguments are urged, and several remedies pointed out.

1. Consider that these sins shut persons out of heaven, ver. 5. As the glutton makes a god of his belly; so a covetous man makes a god of his money; places that hope, confidence, and delight, in worldly good, which should be reserved for God only. These persons have no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ, who is God. That kingdom is the inheritance of the saints in light. But those who allow themselves, either in the lusts of the flesh or the love of the world, are not christians indeed, and so belong not to the kingdom of grace, nor shall they come to the kingdom of glory. Let us be on our guard against sins which shut out of heaven.

2. These sins bring the wrath of God upon those guilty of them, ver. 6. Let none flatter you, as though they were not very offensive unto God; as though you might indulge in them, and yet escape with impunity. Thus Satan deceived our first parents. They are vain words indeed; for those who trust to them, will find themselves wretchedly imposed upon, for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. When the vilest transgressors repented and believed the gospel, they become children of obedience, from whom God's wrath is turned away. But it could not be expected that he would punish gentiles for abominations, and connive at the like in professors of christianity. Disobedience is the very malignity of sin. It is by a usual

hebrew expression that sinners are called children of disobedience; such indeed they are from their childhood, going astray as soon as they are born. The wrath of God comes upon such, because of their sins; sometimes in this world, but more especially in the next. Dare we make light of that which will lay us under the wrath of God? O no. Be not ye therefore partakers with them, ver. 7, in their sins, that ye may not share in their punishment. We partake with other men in their sins, not only when we live in the same sinful manner, and comply with their temptations and solicitations to sin, but when we encourage them in their sins.

3. Consider what obligations christians are under to live otherwise than such sinners do, ver. 8. The apostle calls their former condition darkness. They lived wicked and profane lives, being destitute of the light of instruction without, and of the illumination and grace of the blessed Spirit within. Sinners, like men in the dark, are going they know not whither, and doing they know not what. But the grace of God had produced a mighty change in their souls; Now are ye light in the Lord, savingly enlightened by the word and the Spirit of God. As one with Christ, the Light of the world. Walk as children of light, as endued with knowledge and holiness. Being such, let your conversation be suitable to your condition and privileges, and live up to the obligation you are under by that knowledge, and the advantages you enjoy. We must not only dread and avoid what is displeasing to God, but inquire and consider what will be acceptable to him, ver. 10; searching the scriptures with this view; thus keeping at the greatest distance from these sins.

The apostle points out some remedies,

1. If we would not be entangled by the lusts of the flesh, we must bring forth the fruit of the Spirit, ver. 9. The children of light being illuminated, are also sanctified by the Spirit, and thereupon bring forth his fruit, are led in a suitable conversation. All religion is goodness and righteousness. Prove or make trial of the things God accepted or delighted in, and seek solid enjoyment in them.

2. We must have no fellowship with sinners, ver. 11. Sinners are not always

from the darkness of ignorance, they seek the darkness of concealment, and they lead to the darkness of hell. These works of darkness are unfruitful, whatever profit is pretended by sin; for they issue in the destruction of the impenitent sinner. There are many ways of being accessory to the sins of others; by commendation, counsel, consent, or concealment. And if we share with others in their sins, we must expect to share with them in their plagues. If we thus have fellowship with them, we shall be in danger of acting as they do. If we do not reprove the sins of others, we have fellowship with them. We must witness against the sins of others, by abounding in the contrary duties. Their sins are so abominable, that it is a shame to mention them, except in reproof, ver. 12; the things done of them in secret. The apostle seems to speak of the gentile idolaters, and of their horrid mysteries, which abounded with detestable wickedness. A good man will be ashamed to speak of that which many wicked people are not ashamed to act.

But all those unfruitful works are laid open, ver. 13, and made to appear in their proper colours to the sinners themselves, by the light of doctrine or of God's word in faithful reprovers; or by the instructive light diffused by an exemplary walk. It is not a mere sight and knowledge that sin is sin, and in some measure shameful, but a sight of it as a breach of God's holy law. Those heathens had some knowledge of sin, and the shame that was in it, therefore they ran to secrecy with it; but a further discovery is spoken of by the light of reproof which is useful and necessary.

Christ, by his ministers, continually calls upon sinners; Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead. He encourages them by a gracious promise; Christ shall enlighten thee, shall shine upon thee. He shall bring thee into a state of knowledge, holiness, and comfort; refreshing thy mind with joy and peace here, and rewarding thee with eternal glory at length. When endeavouring to convince sinners, we imitate God and Christ, in their great design through the gospel. Some understand this as a call to sinners and to saints: to sinners, to repent and be converted; to saints, to stir up themselves to charity, in love. The former must arise from the particle *et*

their spiritual death; and the other must awake from their spiritual deadness. After the example of prophets and apostles, we should call on those who are asleep and dead in sin, to awake and arise that Christ may give them light; and the Lord will employ such warnings and invitations to quicken the ignorant and careless as he sees to be for his glory, even as he uses the instructions of his ministers to guide awakened persons in the paths of peace and holy obedience.

3. *Baine* defines covetousness to be, seeking of earthly goods with neglect of heavenly things, striving after wealth, and holding it sinfully, the want of contentment, and grieving more for the loss of property than for the loss of God's favour. He shows that it is filthy and idolatrous, and adds, "It is a monster of many heads, a nest of wickedness being in it, trust in ourselves, distrust of God, hardness of heart, carelessness of our brethren, unmercifulness, service to the creature, nay, the devil; for in these courses men worship him, Luke 4. 6. It may be said of a covetous man as they say of the grounds that gold and silver are found in—they are fruitless, nothing that is good grows in them."

5. "The kingdom of Christ, even of God."—*Sharp*. A collection of passages made by *Wordsworth* shows that in all instances where this clause is cited by writers down to the twelfth century, so as to be determinate to the sense of these words, they are referred to one object, to Christ as being God.

11—13. The apostle here refers to the heathen mysteries which were truly unfruitful works of darkness, and which when contrasted with the purity and clearness of the truths revealed by christianity, showed most fully the advantage and necessity of the christian revelation.—See *Macknight*, also *Leland*.

Ver. 15—21. Another remedy against sin, is, circumspection, care, and caution, ver. 15, it being impossible else to maintain purity and holiness of heart and life. Walk circumspectly, accurately, exactly, in the right way: frequently consulting the sacred oracles. Not as fools, who through neglect, and want of care, fall into sin, and destroy themselves; but as wise, as persons endued with wisdom from above. Redeeming the time, ver. 16, literally buying the opportunity. Believers must improve time by watching against temptations: by doing good while it is in their power; and by proper employment—one special preservative from sin. They should make the best use of the present seasons. Time is a talent given us by God, and it is mispent and lost when not employed according to his design. If we have lost our time heretofore, we

must double our diligence for the future. Because the days are evil.

The precious time, on the right management of which eternity depends, and in the improvement of which our happiness is interested, that time which thousands on a dying bed, or in the invisible state would gladly redeem at the price of the whole world—how little do we think of its value, and to what trifles we daily sacrifice it! Yea, to what trifles do we not sacrifice it! In the several divisions of it, when we come to reflect seriously on the morning, the forenoon, the afternoon, and the evening, how remiss are we in the proper business of each!—(80)

Those were times of persecution. When the days are evil, there is one superadded argument to redeem time; we know not how soon they may become worse. People are very apt to complain of bad times; it were well if that stirred them to redeem time. Because of the badness of the times, be not unwise, ignorant of duty and negligent about our souls; but study, consider, and acquaint yourselves with th. will of God, as determining your duty. Ignorance of our duty, and neglect of our souls, are evidences of the greatest folly.

Drunkenness was a sin very frequent among the heathen, ver. 18; and all manner of inordinate lusts were consequent upon it. Excess, the word may signify luxury or dissoluteness; and it is certain that drunkenness contains all manner of extravagance, and transports men into gross sensuality and vile enormities. Drunkenness is a sin that seldom, if ever, goes alone, but involves men in other evils; it is a sin very provoking to God.

The drunkard wastes his property, destroys his health, wastes his reputation, destroys his usefulness, ruins his family, destroys his life, and ruins his soul. He destroys his reason. In this manner he is unfitted for all profitable use of the means of grace, and for all attention to eternal life. Every call of mercy finds him stupid and regardless. To every threatening his ears are deaf; to every promise his heart is insensible. The power of motives he knows not how to feel; even their nature he cannot comprehend. To temptations he is always exposed, alive and awake. Around him temptations throng, every

tempter fastens on him. Sin becomes his business, and he is beyond most other men hopeless of reformation. Amendment is so rare as scarcely to admit belief. He is cut off from prayer. No person who intends to sin can pray. Thus the drunkard holds out to his family and to the world, the deplorable spectacle of a sinner hardened beyond the common measure; exposing himself to sin of every kind and in every degree, yet voluntarily depriving himself of the usual means of repentance, hastening to perdition, yet closing his eyes to the precipice on which he stands, and the terrors of the gulf beneath.—(17.)

Instead of being filled with wine, let believers be filled with the Spirit. Those who are full of drink cannot be full of the Spirit. A plentiful measure of the graces of the Spirit, would fill the soul with holy joy, and strength; and with courage, with which sensual men expect their wine should inspire them. Be not satisfied with a little of the Spirit, but aspire to be filled with the Spirit. By this we shall come to understand what the will of the Lord is. When afflicted or weary, let us not procure a vain exhilaration by any degree of intemperance, which is hateful and pernicious, and only ends in deeper dejection; but by fervent prayer let us seek to be filled with the Spirit, and avoid whatever may grieve our gracious Comforter.

Those who are filled with the Spirit will be carried out in acts of devotion, ver. 19. Drunkards are wont to sing evil and profane songs; but the joy of christians should express itself in praise to God. In these songs they should speak to themselves in their assemblies, for mutual edification, using the psalms and hymns of the sacred scripture, and such spiritual songs as pious men have composed on the subjects of the gospel, and according to the doctrines of truth. Singing psalms and hymns is an ordinance of God, appointed for his glory. Christianity encourages joy and gladness, and the proper expressions of these. God's people have reason to sing for joy. They are to make melody; not only with their voices, but with inward affections. Their doing this will be delightful and acceptable to God, and it must be to promote his glory that we do this, ver. 20. Though we are not always

singing, we should be always giving thanks; we should never want a disposition for this duty, as we never want matter for it, throughout the whole course of our lives. *Always*, even in trials and afflictions, and for *all things*, even such as nature disrelishes, being satisfied of their loving interit, and beneficial tendency. We should give thanks; not only for spiritual blessings enjoyed, and eternal ones expected, but for temporal mercies. Not only for our comforts, but also for our sanctified afflictions; not only for what immediately concerns ourselves, but for God's kindness to others. It is our duty in every thing to give thanks unto God and the Father; to God as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our Father in him; in whose name we are to offer up our prayers, and praises, and spiritual services, that they may be acceptable. As a general foundation for relative duties, the mutual submission christians owe one to another is laid down. St. Paul was an example of this truly christian temper, who became all things to all men.

And the Divine influences will both direct and enable believers to behave in a becoming manner in all public and private relations of life, according to their respective ranks and stations, that they may perform their mutual duties towards each other. They have an awe of God upon their consciences, and are fearful of offending him who has enjoined these duties; as under the government of his new covenant, God keeps them from sinning against him, and engages them to submit one to another in all he has commanded, to promote his glory and to fulfil their other duties to each other.—(82.)

19. The heathens, in their bacchanalian or drunken festivals especially, sang hymns of praise to the god of wine. •

"Speaking to one another."—*Scholefield*,

Ver. 22—33. The apostle speaks of the duties of husbands and wives; setting the church as an example of the wife's subjection, and Christ as an example of love in husbands. The duty of wives, is, submission to their husbands in the Lord, ver. 22, which includes honouring and obeying them, from a principle of love to them. God not only requires the duties which respect himself, but such as respect our neighbours also. For the husband is the head of the wife, ver. 23,

God has given the man a right to govern, Gen. 3. 16. Whatever uneasiness arises from hence, is an effect of sin coming into the world, and should be particularly guarded against. There is a resemblance of Christ's authority over the church, in the superiority and headship God has appointed to the husband. And he is the Saviour of the body. Christ's authority is over the church for saving her from evil, and supplying her with every thing good. In like manner should the husband protect and comfort his wife; therefore she should cheerfully subject herself unto him. So it follows, As the church is subject unto Christ, ver. 24, with cheerfulness, with fidelity, with humility, so let the wives be to their own husbands, in every thing lawful, and consistent with duty to God.

The duty of husbands is to love their wives, ver. 25. The love of Christ to the church is proposed as an example, which love is a sincere, pure, ardent, constant affection, notwithstanding her imperfections and failures. The greatness of his love to the church appeared in his giving himself to death upon the cross for it. Observe, As the church's subjection to Christ is proposed as an example to wives, so the love of Christ to his church is proposed as a pattern to husbands. The love God requires from the husband towards his wife, will make amends for the subjection he demands from her to her husband; and the subjection of the wife will be an abundant return for that love of the husband God has made her due.

Christ gave himself for the church, that he might sanctify it in this world, and glorify it in the next, ver. 26, 27. That he might sanctify and cleanse it, with the washing of water by the word, ver. 26, that he might endue all his members with a principle of holiness, and deliver them from the guilt, the pollution, and the dominion of sin, by those influences of the Holy Spirit, of which baptismal water was the outward sign, and communicated through the word, as the instrument of conversion and sanctification. That he might unite to himself in the great day, a glorious church, perfect in knowledge and in holiness, not having anything of deformity or defilement remaining, but amiable and pleasing in his sight; the purchase of his blood, and the work of his grace, free from the

remains of sin. The church in general, and particular believers, will not be without spot or wrinkle till they come to glory. From this and the former verse we may notice that those only who are sanctified now, shall be glorified hereafter.

The wife being made one with her husband, in a relative sense, is an argument why he should love her with as cordial and ardent affection, ver. 28. For no man ever yet hated himself, ver. 29, whatever his imperfections might be. He uses himself with care and tenderness; and is industrious to supply himself with every thing convenient or good. Even as the Lord nourishes and cherishes the church, which he furnishes with all things that conduce to her everlasting happiness and welfare.

Christ nourishes and cherishes his church—because all who belong to it are members of his body, of his mystical body. All the grace and glory which the church has, are from Christ; we are members of Christ. The apostle refers to Gen. 2. 24. We are not to understand that a man's obligation to other relations is cancelled upon his marriage; but that this relation is to be preferred to all others; the man must rather leave any than his wife. This is a great mystery, ver. 32. The words of Adam, mentioned by the apostle, are spoken literally of marriage; but they have also a hidden mystical sense in them, relating to the union between Christ and his church. It was a kind of a natural type, as having resemblance to it.

This passage concludes with a brief summary of the duty of husbands and wives, ver. 33. Nevertheless; though there is such a secret, mystical sense, yet the plain literal sense concerns you. Let every one love his wife with such a sincere and prevailing affection as that he bears to himself. Reverence consists of love and esteem, which produce care to please; and of fear, which awakens caution lest just offence be given. That the wife thus reverence her husband, is the will of God, and the law of the relation. There must in all cases be failures and defects on both sides, in the present state of human nature, yet this does not alter the relation.

All the duties of marriage are reducible to unity and love; a love which is tender and pure, vigilant and careful in the husband; humble and obedient,

prudent and respectful, in the wife. One Jesus Christ, one husband. One church, one wife. One spirit and one heart in the husband and in the wife, by conformity of thoughts and will, as there is but one Spirit and one heart in Christ and in the church, doing all in both.—(94)

While we adore and rejoice in the condescending love of Christ, and reverence the mystery of this sacred union with the Lord, let husbands and wives learn hence their relative duties to each other. If this subject were duly attended to, no harshness, tyranny and unfaithfulness would exist; and unreasonable attachment to humour and inclination, as interfering with cheerful obedience, would be prevented. Thus the worst evils would be prevented, and many painful and disagreeable consequences avoided. If christianity generally prevailed, and christians were more attentive to the precepts of their Lord, harmony and affectionate confidence would sweeten domestic life; but as all are sinners, it behoves every one to make concessions and allowances, and to persevere in the duty of the relation, even if attended with a cross.

32. The latin word "sacramentum" having been here used in the sense of "a mystery," in the vulgate translation, is a main argument by which the church of Rome has denominated marriage a sacrament, yet the word "sacramentum," in latin, has significations that the greek word "mystery" has not. And the english word sacrament, is restrained, and taken only for outward seals of God's grace.—See *Falk.*

CHAPTER VI.

The apostle proceeds to the relative duties of children and parents, ver. 1-4. Of servants and masters, 5-9. Directs all sorts of christians to put on their spiritual armour in the exercise of their graces, and in the use of those means, which are necessary to defend, and secure them against the enemies of their souls, in this state of warfare, 10-18. Desires their prayers for himself, 19, 20. And concludes his epistle with an account of the reasons of his sending Tychicus to them, and with his apostolic benediction, 21-24.

Ver. 1-4. Here we have further directions concerning relative duties, to all of which the gospel furnishes efficacious motives. The great duty of children is, to obey their parents, ver. 1. That obedience includes inward reverence, as well

as outward expressions and acts. Obey in the Lord, consistently with your duty to God; for the Lord's sake, and looking to him. For this is right, God enjoins it, and it is the order of nature. The apostle quotes the fifth commandment, Honour thy father and mother, ver. 2, which honour implies reverence, obedience, and relief and maintenance if needed. This was placed as the first commandment to relative duties; and a promise of long life in the land of Canaan, was annexed as given to the children of Israel; and it has been observed in every age that remarkable prosperity has attended those distinguished for filial obedience. This is the way to have it well with us; and obedient children are often rewarded with outward prosperity; not indeed that it is always so; but where it is not, it is made up with something better.

The duty of parents, ver. 4. Do not provoke your children to wrath. Though God has given you power, you must not abuse that power; remembering that your children are parts of yourselves, and therefore ought to be governed with great tenderness and love. Be not impatient with them; use no unreasonable severities. When you caution, when you counsel, when you reprove, do it so as not to provoke to wrath. In all such cases deal prudently and wisely with them, endeavouring to convince their judgments, and to work upon their reason. Bring them up well; in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; in the discipline of proper and of compassionate correction; and in the knowledge of the duty God requires of them. It is the great duty of parents to be careful in the education of their children. Not only taking care to provide for their bodies, but bringing them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord as christians. Let them have a religious education. Instruct them to fear sinning; and inform them of, and excite them to the whole of their duty toward the world, and to resist the temptations of Satan. Often indeed is this duty neglected, even among professors of the gospel. Many prejudice their children against religion, which does not excuse the children's disobedience, though it awfully occasions it. And how often do we see more regard paid to earthly instruction and trifling embellishments, than to

religious principles and conduct. Those who fear God and love their children will watch and pray lest they prove the occasion of condemnation to their own offspring. God alone can change the heart, yet he gives his blessing to the good instructions and examples of parents, and answers their fervent prayers. But those, whose chief anxiety seems to be that their children should be rich and accomplished, whatever become of their souls, can have no ground to expect the blessing of God upon them.

Ver. 5-9. The duty of servants also is here summed up in one word—obedience. These servants were generally slaves. Even that servitude cannot prevent christian liberty. Those may be the Lord's freemen, who are slaves to men. Your masters according to the flesh, ver. 5, who have the command of your bodies, but not of your souls and consciences: God alone has dominion over these. In the wisdom of God the apostles were left to take such matters as they found them, and to teach servants and masters their respective duties, in the performance of which the evil would be mitigated, till slavery should be extirpated by the influence of christianity.

1. They are to obey with fear and trembling. They are to reverence those who are over them; fearing to displease them, and trembling lest they should justly incur their anger and indignation.

2. They are to be sincere in their obedience; in singleness of heart; not pretending obedience when they design disobedience, but serving faithfully.

3. They should look to Jesus Christ, in all the service they perform to their masters, ver. 5, 7, doing service as to the Lord, and not to men; not to men only or principally. When servants, in the discharge of the duty of their places, look to Christ, service done to their earthly masters becomes an acceptable service to him also. To have regard to Christ, is to remember he sees us, and is ever present with us; and his authority obliges to a faithful and conscientious discharge of relative duties.

4. They must not serve their masters only when their master's eye is upon them; but must be conscientious in the discharge of their duty, when he is absent and out of the way; because then their Master in heaven beholds them; and they

must not act as supposing they can approve themselves to God, if they impose upon their masters. A steady regard to the Lord Jesus Christ will make men faithful and sincere in every station.

6. What they do, they must do cheerfully; serving their masters, as God wills they should, not grudgingly or by constraint, but from a principle of love to them and their concerns, ver. 7. This makes service easy to themselves, pleasing to their masters, and acceptable to the Lord Christ. There should be good-will to their masters; and good-will to the families they are in; especially readiness to do their duty to God.

Let every faithful servant trust and fear God, while doing his duty. Though his master on earth neglect or abuse, instead of rewarding, he shall certainly be rewarded by the Lord Christ; whether he be a poor bond-servant, or a freeman. Christ regards not these differences of men at present; nor will he in the great and final judgment. God will certainly reward even the meanest drudgery that is done from a sense of duty, and with a view to glorify him. And what more can be said, both to engage and to encourage servants to their duty?

Here is the duty of masters, ver. 9. Act after the same manner. Be just to servants, as ye expect they should be to you; show the like good-will and concern for them, and be careful herein to approve yourselves to God. Forbear threatening; your servants are of the same mould with yourselves, therefore be not tyrannical and imperious over them, knowing that your Master also is in heaven; some copies read, both your and their Master. You have a Master to obey, who makes this your duty; and you and they are but fellow-servants in respect to Christ. You will be punishable by him, for the neglect of your duty, or for acting contrary to it, as well as others of meaner condition in the world. You will not be able to withstand him, though you may be too hard for your servants. Neither is there respect of persons with him. A rich, a wealthy, a dignified master, if unjust, imperious, and abusive, is not nearer being accepted of God, for his riches, wealth, and honour. He will call masters and servants to an account for their conduct one to another. If masters and servants would consider both their

relation and obligation to God, and the account they must shortly give to him, they would be more mindful of their duty to each other. And what orderly and happy families will those be, where relative duties are thus attended to.

Ver. 10-18. Here is a general exhortation to constancy in the christian course, and to courage in the christian warfare. Is not our life a warfare? Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might, ver. 10. Be strong for service, strong for suffering, strong for fighting. Spiritual strength and courage are very necessary for our spiritual warfare. Be strong in the Lord; in his cause, and for his sake; in his strength. We have no sufficient strength of our own. We must resist temptations in reliance upon God's all-sufficiency, and might. We must be well armed; Put on the whole armour of God, ver. 11, use all the proper defences and weapons for repelling the temptations and stratagems of Satan. Those who would approve themselves to have true grace, must aim at all grace; the whole armour of God, which he prepares and bestows. The christian should be completely armed, to be able to stand against the wiles of the devil, that he may be able to hold out, and overcome, notwithstanding all assaults, both of force and fraud.

Put on. It is not enough to have grace, but this grace must be kept in exercise. The christian armour is made to be worn; there is to be no putting off our armour till we have done our warfare and finished our course. Our armour and our garment of flesh go off together; then indeed there will be no need of watch and ward, shield or helmet. In heaven we shall appear, not in armour, but in robes of glory; here the armour is to be worn night and day; we must walk, work, and sleep therein, or else we are not true soldiers of Christ.—(28.)

1. Observe our danger, and the need we have to put on this whole armour; considering what sort of enemies we have to deal with—the devil, and all the powers of darkness, ver. 12. The combat is not against human enemies; nor against our own corrupt natures only, but we have to do with a subtle enemy; an enemy who uses wiles and stratagems, as ver. 11. He has a thousand ways of beguiling unstable souls. He is a powerful enemy.

Principalities, powers, and rulers oppose him: numerous, vigorous enemies that rule in the dark heathen nations. The dark parts of the world are the seat of Satan's empire. Satan's is a kingdom of darkness; whereas Christ's is a kingdom of light. They are spiritual enemies; spiritual wickedness in high places; or wicked spirits; and our danger is the greater from our enemies, because they are unseen, and assault us ere we are aware. The devils provoke to spiritual wickednesses, pride, envy, malice. These enemies are said to be in high places, or in heavenly places; so the word is, taking heaven for the expanse, or spreading of the air, from whence the devils assault us. They assault us in the things that belong to our souls, and labour to deface the heavenly image in our hearts. They might be called spiritual wickednesses in high places, not only as they held their empire in the air, but as they became apostates and rebels even in heavenly places; and being spiritual wickednesses in that holy world, they were cast out thence. Thus we see our danger.

2. Observe what our duty is, to take and put on the whole armour of God, and withstand our enemies, ver. 13. We must not yield to the devil's allurements and assaults. Satan is the wicked one, and to stand against Satan, is to strive against sin. That ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, in the time of temptation, & of affliction. And having done all, to stand. We must resolve by God's grace, not to yield to Satan. Resist him, he will flee. If we retreat, he will get ground. If we distrust, either our cause, or our Leader, or our armour, we give him an advantage. Our present business is to withstand the assaults of the devil; and in the fulness of Christ and the graces of the Spirit, a panoply or complete suit of armour is provided for every believer, which they are daily to put on, in diligent and watchful use of means. Here is a christian in complete armour: and the armour is divine. The apostle specifies the particulars of this armour, both offensive and defensive. But there is none for the back; if we turn our backs upon the enemy, we lie exposed.

(1.) Truth or sincerity is the girdle, ver.

14. It was prophesied of Christ, Isa. 11. 5, that righteousness should be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins. That which Christ was girt with, all christians must be girt with. God desires truth, that is, sincerity, in the inward parts. This girds on all the other pieces of our armour, and therefore is first mentioned. There can be no religion without sincerity. Their minds should be fortified and prepared, by conscious sincerity in their profession, and truth in their whole conversation.

(2.) Righteousness must be our breast-plate. The righteousness of Christ, imputed to us, is our breast-plate against the arrows of Divine wrath. The righteousness of Christ, implanted in us, is our breast-plate to fortify the heart against the attacks which Satan makes against us. Righteousness, or an habitual and conscientious obedience to the commandments of God, should be the breast-plate, which will defend from fatal wounds in the day of conflict, whereas negligence and disobedience would render them afraid to face persecution or death in the cause of Christ.

(3.) Resolution must be as the greaves to our legs; And their feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, ver. 15. Shoes were formerly part of the military armour. To stand their ground in such difficult situations, or to march forward in such rugged paths, their feet must be shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. Motives and encouragements to obedience, amidst temptations and persecutions, must be derived from a clear knowledge of the gospel, through which God is revealed as in Christ, reconciling sinners to himself. This would animate the believer through difficulties and enemies, in the cause of Christ, and in the way to heaven.

(4.) Faith must be our shield. Above all, or chiefly, taking the shield of faith, ver. 16. Faith is all in all in an hour of temptation. The breast-plate secures the vitals; but the shield can be turned every way. This is the victory over the world, even our faith. We are to be fully persuaded of the truth of all God's promises and threatenings; such faith being of the greatest use against temptations. Faith, as realizing unseen objects, receiving Christ, and the benefits of redemption, so deriving grace from him, is like a shield, a universal defence.

The devil is here called the wicked one. He is wicked himself, and he endeavours to make us wicked. His temptations are called darts, because of their swift and undiscerned flight, and fiery darts, want to inflame the parts wounded by them. Violent temptations, by which the soul is set on fire of hell, are the darts Satan shoots at us. Also hard thoughts of God, and harassing conclusions as to ourselves. Faith is the shield, with which we must quench these fiery darts; wherein we should receive them, and so render them ineffectual, that they may not hurt us. Faith, applying the word of God and the grace of Christ, quenches darts of temptation.

(5.) Salvation must be our helmet, ver. 17, that is, hope, which has salvation for its object; so 1 Thess. 5. 8. The helmet secures the head. A good hope of salvation, a scriptural expectation of victory and eternal glory, well founded and well built, will both purify the soul, and keep it from being defiled by Satan. It will comfort the soul, and keep it from being troubled and tormented by Satan. He would tempt us to despair; but good hope keeps us trusting in God, and rejoicing in him.

(6.) God's word is the sword of the Spirit. To the christian armed for defence in battle, the apostle recommends only one offensive weapon; but it is abundantly sufficient. The sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, Sharper than any two-edged sword, the work of man, it pierces even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit; reaching the very thoughts and intentions, subduing and mortifying evil desires and blasphemous imaginations as they rise within, confuting unbelief and error as they assault from without. A single text, well understood, and rightly applied, pierces the heart of a temptation or an objection, and lays the most formidable adversary dead at our feet. With this weapon the blessed Jesus conquered in the wilderness; by the same weapon, and no other, must every disciple expect to conquer in this world.—(32.)

(7.) Prayer must fasten on all the other parts of our christian armour, ver. 18. We must join prayer with all these graces, for defence against these spiritual enemies; imploring help and assistance of God, as the case requires: and we must pray always. Not as though we

were to do nothing but pray; there are other duties of religion, and of our respective stations in the world, but we should keep up constant times of prayer, and persevere therein. We must always keep up a disposition to prayer; and intermix ejaculatory prayers with duties, and with business. Though set and solemn prayer may not be seasonable when other duties are to be done, yet pious ejaculations always are so.

We must use ourselves to holy thoughts in our ordinary course. A vain heart out of prayer, will be little better in prayer. The more familiar holy thoughts are in our constant walking, the more seasoned will our hearts be to this duty. The carnal liberty we give our hearts in our ordinary walk, makes our thoughts more unruly and unsuitable for duties of worship. If you walk in the company of sinful thoughts all the day, you will hardly shut the door upon them when you go into your closet. You have taught them to be bold, they will now plead acquaintance with you.—(28.)

We must pray with all prayer and supplication; with all kinds of prayer, public, private, and secret; social and solitary; solemn and sudden; with all the parts of prayer: confession of sin, petition for mercy, and thanksgivings for favours received. We must pray in the Spirit; our spirits must be employed in the duty; and we must do it by the grace of God the Holy Spirit, in dependence on and according to his teaching. We must watch thereunto; keep our hearts in a praying frame, and take all occasions, and improve all opportunities for the duty. We must persevere in prayer; not cutting it short. We must persevere in particular requests, notwithstanding any present discouragements and repulses. And we must pray with supplication, not for ourselves only, but for all saints; for we are members one of another. None are so much saints, and in so good a condition in this world, but they need our prayers. Our enemies indeed are mighty, and we are without strength, but our Redeemer is almighty, and in the power of his might we may overcome all that oppose our course: Let us then daily put on the armour the Captain of our salvation has prepared for us. We must engage in this warfare as men in earnest, continually expecting

the attacks of our foes by open violence or secret stratagems. But armed, and praying always with all earnestness, by the Holy Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance, we shall be made more than conquerors, through Him that loved us.

Wherefore we must stir up ourselves, strengthening our feeble knees, lifting up our fainting hearts; we must not let delay beat us out. Shall we limit God presently to hear us? Let hypocrites say. Isa. 68. We have fasted, and thou regardest not. Are we better than Paul, who prayed thrice, yet was glad to rest in this that God's grace was sufficient? Are we better than those who have said, How long? Have not we, when God has called and knocked, often neglected to answer? Let us consider these things, and let us continue our prayers with patience.—(76)

11-18. The different parts of the armour of heavy-armed soldiers who had to sustain the fiercest assaults of the enemy, are here described. The term used for the shield denotes the large oblong shield of the Romans, which protected the whole body. Above all, or about all, may be considered as encompassing yourself with this shield. The fiery darts consisted of a hollow reed, under the point of which was an iron receptacle, containing naphtha, which consumed wherever it fixed, and could not be extinguished by water. Praying always—the ancients constantly offered up prayers before they engaged in battle.

The great design of the apostle was to show that truth, righteousness, obedience to the gospel, faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, a well-grounded hope of salvation, a thorough knowledge of the word of God, and a continual dependence on, and applying to him by prayer, were essentially necessary to every soul who desired to walk uprightly in this life, and finally to attain everlasting blessedness.—*A. Clarke.*

Ver. 19-24. The apostle desires the prayers of the Ephesians for himself, ver. 19. We must pray for all saints, particularly for God's faithful ministers. He would have them pray in his behalf, that he may be enlarged from his present restraints, and so have liberty to propagate the faith of Christ; that he may have ability to express himself in a suitable and becoming manner; that he may deliver the whole counsel of God, without base fear, shame, or partiality. The gospel was a mystery, till made known by Divine revelation; and it is the work of Christ's ministers to publish it.

It is such a secret that the wisdom of man never could have found out. What

man or angel could have thought of such a way for reconciling God and man, as is laid out in the gospel? How impossible for them to have conjectured what purposes of love were locked up in the heart of God towards fallen man! Till He himself opened his counsel, none other could make it known.—(28.)

St. Paul had a great command of language, Acts 14, 12, and yet he would have his friends ask of God the gift of utterance for him. He was a man of great courage, and often signalized himself for it; yet he would have them pray that God would give him boldness. He knew as well what to say as any man; yet he desires them to pray for him, that he may speak as he ought to speak. He was persecuted and imprisoned for preaching the gospel; yet he continued the embassy committed to him by Christ, and persisted in preaching it. It is no new thing for Christ's ministers to be in bonds, and it is a hard thing for them to speak boldly, when that is their case. The best and most eminent ministers need, and may receive advantage from the prayers of believers. They are exposed to the special rage of the enemy; when they fall, it is as when a standard-bearer faints, and their honourable character is of the greatest importance. These particularly should be prayed for who are exposed to great hardships and perils in their work.

He recommends Tychicus to them, ver. 21, 22. It is desirable christian friends should know the state of ministers; for by this means they may the better help each other in their prayers. And that he might comfort their hearts; by giving such an account of his sufferings, of the cause of them, and of the temper of his mind, and his behaviour under them, as might prevent their fainting at his tribulations, and even minister matter of joy and thanksgiving to them. Tychicus was a sincere christian; so a brother in Christ; a faithful minister in the work of Christ; and he was very dear to St. Paul: which makes his love to these christian Ephesians the more observable, that he should part with so dear a friend for their sakes, when his company must have been peculiarly serviceable to himself. But the faithful servants of Jesus Christ prefer the public good to their private or personal interests.

He concludes with his good wishes and prayers for them; and for all the brethren, ver. 23, 24. Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith. By peace we are to understand all manner of peace; peace with God, peace with conscience, peace among themselves; and all outward prosperity is included in the word. And love with faith; the grace of the Spirit flowing from that divine principle, faith and love including all the rest. The continuance and increase of these he desires for them, in whom they were already begun. He adds, from God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. All grace and blessings are derived to the saints from God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

The closing benediction is still more extensive; for in this he prays for all true believers at Ephesus, and every where else. It is the undoubted cha-

racter of all the saints, that they love our Lord Jesus Christ, and there is no such thing as love to Christ, where there is not sincerity. Or, Grace be with all who love our Lord Jesus Christ; whose love to him is uncorrupted by any lust, or the love of any thing displeasing to him. Grace, that is, the favour of God; and all good, spiritual and temporal, that is the product of it, is and shall be with all them who thus love our Lord Jesus Christ, in sincerity, and with them only. And it is, or ought to be, the desire and prayer of every lover of Christ, that it may be so with all his fellow-christians. Amen, so be it.

20. The original of the word here translated bonds, denotes precisely the mode of custody in which the apostle then was; see Acts 28. 28, when the prisoner was bound to a soldier by a single chain, though the expression, Col. 4. 3, is a more general one.—*Paley*.

THE EPISTLE TO THE PHILIPPIANS.

THE particulars of the first planting of christianity at Philippi, in Macedonia, are recorded, Acts 16. The Philippians seem to have felt a deeper interest for the apostle than those of any other church he had been instrumental in planting. From several passages they appear to have been peculiarly generous towards him, although their number was small. This aid having been sent to Rome by Epaphroditus, one of their pastors, Paul wrote to them by him on his return.

The scope of the epistle is to confirm the Philippians in the faith, to encourage them to walk as becomes the gospel of Christ, to caution them against Judaizing teachers, and to testify gratitude for their christian bounty.

The contents of this epistle may be stated as follows :

1. The apostle expresses his thankfulness that the Philippians were stedfast in the faith, and prays that they may continue so, and assures them of his readiness to live or die, as should be most for their welfare and the Divine glory, ch. 1. 1—20.

2. He exhorts them to conduct worthy of the gospel, and to mutual affection, enforced by the most powerful example, that of Christ, ch. 1. 21—30; 2. 1—17.

3. He cautions against teachers who preached Christ through envy and strife, ch. 3. 4. 1.

4. After some admonitions and general exhortations, he urges upon them whatever is virtuous and praise-worthy, ch. 4. 2—9. He then acknowledges their kindness, and notices the contentment he had learned under the teachings of Divine grace, ch. 4. 10—18. Then encouraging them to expect a rich supply of all their wants from their God and Father, he concludes with salutations and a benediction.

This epistle is the only one, among those written by St. Paul, in which no censures are implied or expressed. Sentiments of unqualified commendation and confidence pervade every part of it, and the Philippians are addressed with a peculiar unction, which every serious reader will perceive.

CHAPTER I.

The apostle Paul inscribes this epistle to the church at Philippi, and its officers, ver. 1, 2. Offers up thanksgivings and prayers to God, on account of the good work of grace, which he was satisfied would be perfected, as in the judgment of his charity, and love, he hoped this concerning them, 3—7. He expresses his affection, and

prays for them, 8—11. Fortifies them against dejection at his sufferings, which turned to good account, in exciting others to preach Christ, 12—20. Tells them that he stood prepared for glorifying Christ by life, or death, 21—26. And exhorts to all holy conversation, zeal, and constancy in professing the gospel, notwithstanding the opposition of their adversaries, 27—30.

Ver. 1,². Paul joins Timothy with himself, to express his own humility, and put honour upon Timothy. The highest honour of the greatest apostle, and most eminent ministers, is, to be, not masters of the churches, but servants of Christ. The Christians here are called saints; set apart for God, or sanctified by his Spirit, either by visible profession or real holiness. And those who are not really saints on earth, will never be saints in heaven. It is directed to all the saints, even the meanest, the poorest, and those of the least gifts. Christ makes no difference; the rich and the poor meet together in him; and ministers must not make a difference in their care and tenderness upon these accounts, James 2. 1. Saints in Christ Jesus; saints are accepted only by their being in Christ Jesus, or as they are Christians. Out of Christ the best saints are sinners, and unable to stand before God. The epistle is directed to the bishops and deacons. The bishops or elders, whose office it was to teach and rule: and the deacons, or overseers of the poor, who took care of the outward business of the house of God; the place, the furniture, the maintenance of ministers, and provision for the poor.

The apostolical benediction, ver. 2, is nearly the same, in all the epistles. The good which is wished is spiritual good, grace and peace; the free favour and good-will of God; and all the blessed fruits and effects of it: and that from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ; jointly from them both, though in a different way. Observe, there is no peace without grace. Inward peace springs from a sense of Divine favour. And no grace and peace but from God our Father, the fountain and original of all blessings; the Father of lights, from whom cometh down every good and perfect gift, James 1. 17. Also there is no grace and peace from God our Father, but in and through our Lord Jesus Christ. Christ, as Mediator, conveys all spiritual blessings to the church, and directs the disposal of them to all his members.

Ver. 3-7. The apostle thanked God upon their account. He remembered them, though he was distant from them. As he often thought of them, so he often spake of them, and remembered

them with joy. At Philippi he was evil entreated; and saw little fruit of his labour; yet he remembers Philippi with joy. The best remembrance of our friends, is, to remember them at the throne of grace, ver. 4. Paul was much in prayer for his friends. Always, in every prayer of his, secret or social, he made requests for them with lively emotions of joy, which helped to solace him in his imprisonment. He thanked God upon every joyful remembrance of them. Thanksgiving must have a part in every prayer; and whatever is the matter of our rejoicing, ought to be the matter of our thanksgiving. What we have the comfort of, God must have the glory of. He thanked God, as well as made requests with joy. It encourages us in prayer, and enlarges the heart in praise, to see every mercy coming from the hand of God, as our God. I thank my God upon every remembrance of you. We must thank our God for the graces and comforts, gifts and usefulness of others, as we receive the benefit of them, and God receives glory by them.

He thanks God for the comfort he had in them, ver. 5. The conversion of many souls to partake of all the blessings and salvation of Christ, is indeed a subject of gratitude to God. Gospel fellowship is a good fellowship; and those who sincerely receive the gospel, have fellowship in it from the very first day. Until now. From the first day of their conversion to that present time, several years, without their having turned aside or grown remiss. He was therefore confident, ver. 6, that He, even God the Spirit, who had begun the good work of sanctification in their souls, would carry it on, till their redemption in body and soul was perfected at the day of Christ.

He speaks of the certain accomplishment of the work of grace wherever it is begun. 1. The work of grace is a blessed work; it makes us good, and is an earnest of good to us. 2. Wherever this good work is begun, it is of God's beginning. We are by nature dead in trespasses and sins; and what can dead men do toward raising themselves to life? God quickens those who are thus dead, Eph. 2. 1; Col. 2. 13. 3. The work of grace is only begun in the present life; as long as we are in this imperfect state, there is more to be done. 4. If the same God who begins

the good work, did not undertake to carry on and finish the same, it would be for ever unfinished. 5. We may be confident, or well persuaded, that God will finish and crown the work of his own hands. For, as for God, his work is perfect. 6. The work of grace will never be perfected till the day of Jesus Christ, the day of his appearance: when he shall come to judge the world, and finish his mediation. We may always be confident God will perform his good work in every soul wherein he hath really begun it by regeneration; though we must not trust in outward appearances, sudden emotions, external reformation, and changes of sentiment; in nothing but a new creation to holiness.

The apostle thought much of the Philippians, and was in care about them. For they were partakers of that grace of God, which by him was communicated to them. This makes people dear to their ministers—their receiving benefit by their ministry. They were partakers of his affliction by sympathy and concern, and readiness to assist him. He loved them because they adhered to him in his bonds, and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel. They were as ready to appear in their places, and according to their capacity, for the defence of the gospel, as the apostle was in his. Fellow-sufferers in the cause of God should be dear one to another. They distinguished their respect to him, by adhering firmly to the doctrine he preached, and readily suffering for it with him. It appeared that he had them in his heart, because he had a good opinion of them, and good hopes concerning them. It is right to think of other people as well as we can; to suppose as well of them as matters will admit in all cases.

6. This place sheweth that we, of our own free-will, without the grace of God, are not able to begin any good work, nor to go forth with it, nor to finish it.—Then what shall we ascribe to our free-will without Christ, and without the grace of God? Surely nothing that is good. Evil cometh of ourselves, and all goodness of God, the Father of lights, James 1. And if these be true, as they be in very deed, then, methinks they err, and are to be blamed, that say, that we, of our free-will, may do good, may assent, and receive the grace of God offered to all men, or not assent to it and forsake it, if we list, and at our pleasure and free-will; or else our will, they say, cannot be free or called a free-will.—*L. Ridley.*

Ver. 8—11. Paul was a follower of

Christ, and all good ministers should aim to be so in the compassion which is in Jesus Christ to poor souls! Shall not we pity and love those souls whom Christ has such a love and pity for? For this he appeals to God; God is my record. He expresses towards them an inward disposition of mind, to the sincerity of which God only was witness.

Paul often lets his friends know what he begged of God for them, that they might be directed in their own prayers; and that they might be encouraged to hope they should receive from God quickening, strengthening, establishing, comforting grace. It is encouragement to know we are prayed for by our friends. Let us seek, that we may not disappoint the expectations of praying friends and ministers. He prays,

1. That they might be a loving people, and that good affections, in all their varied exercises and happy effects, might abound among them, ver. 9. He means love to God, and one another, and all men. Love is the fulfilling both of the law and of the gospel. Those who abound in any grace, need to abound more; because something still is wanting, and we are imperfect in our best attainments.

2. That they might be a wise judicious people. We must love God, because of his infinite excellence and loveliness; and love our brethren, because of the image of God upon them. Strong passions, without knowledge and a settled judgment, will not make complete in the will of God, Rom. 10. 2; John 16. 2.

3. That they might be a discerning people. This would be the effect of their knowledge and judgment, the result of experience in religion. That ye may approve the things which are excellent, ver. 10, or, Try the things which differ; that we may approve the things which are excellent upon the trial of them, and discern their difference from other things. The truths and laws of Christ are excellent things; and they recommend themselves as such to any searching and discerning mind.

There is continual need through the whole of our spiritual walk, for the use of a discerning judgment; and in reference thereto, the continual light and influences of the Holy Ghost are needed, for otherwise we put good for evil. That

sense which should be exercised to discern between good and evil, is from the blessed Spirit continually imparting to our discernment fresh vigour, that we may be able to see that here is somewhat to be closed with, here is somewhat to be refused—this will be good, that will be noxious. The apostle on this account earnestly prays on the behalf of the Philippians.—(40.)

4. That they might be an honest, upright-hearted people; That ye may be sincere. Sincerity is that in which we should have our conversation in the world, and which is the glory of all our graces.

5. That they might be an inoffensive people. Not apt to take offence, and very careful not to give offence to God or their brethren. And we must continue to the end blameless, that we may be presented so at the day of Christ. He will present believers faultless before the presence of his glory, with exceeding joy.

6. That they might be a fruitful, useful people, ver. 11. From God is our fruit found, and therefore from him it must be asked. The fruits of righteousness are the evidences and effects of sanctification; the duties of holiness springing from a renewed heart; the root of the matter in us; being filled with the fruits of the Spirit. Those who do much good, should still endeavour to do more. Fear not being emptied by bringing forth the fruits of righteousness, for you will be filled with them. These fruits are by Jesus Christ, by his strength and grace, for without him we can do nothing. We are strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus, 2 Tim. 2. 1, and strengthened with might by his Spirit, Eph. 3. 16; and they are unto the glory and praise of God. We must not aim at our own glory in our fruitfulness, but at the praise and glory of God; that God may be glorified in all things, 1 Pet. 4. 11, and whatsoever we do, we must do all to the glory of God, 1 Cor. 10. 31. Those things which most honour God will most benefit us. Let us not then leave it doubtful whether any good fruit is found in us or not. A small measure of christian love, knowledge, judgment, spirituality and fruitfulness should not satisfy us.

8. The expression here used denotes an affection like that of our Lord Jesus Christ for his people. This application of the word bowels is taken from the commotion or yearning of

bowels, which there is in tender affection, whether of love or pity.—See *Parkhurst*.

10. The word rendered sincere denotes a thing which may be examined in the clearest and strongest light, as an article is held up to the sun, without any flaw or imperfection being discovered.

Ver. 12-20. The apostle was a prisoner at Rome. To take off the offence of the cross, he shows his sufferings were reconcilable to the wisdom and goodness of God.

1. He suffered by the enemies of the gospel; but it tended to further the gospel, ver. 12. It drew the attention of those who were without, ver. 13. My bonds in Christ, or for Christ, are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places. All knew that he suffered for Christ, and not for any wickedness. Paul's sufferings made him known, where perhaps he would never have otherwise been known; and led some to inquire after the gospel for which he suffered, which they might otherwise have never heard of. It unboldened those who were within. As his enemies were startled, so his friends were encouraged, Job 17. 8, 9. Many of the brethren in the Lord waxing confident by my bonds, ver. 14. Paul's consolations received from Christ in a suffering state, encouraged them. They saw that those who served Christ, served a good Master, who could bear them up in their sufferings for him. That which was intended by the enemy to discourage preachers of the gospel, was over-ruled for their encouragement, and they were more bold to speak the word without fear.

2. Paul suffered from false friends, as well as from enemies. Some preached Christ even of envy and strife, not sincerely, ver. 15, 16. They preached the substance of the gospel to form a party. They thought hereby to grieve the apostle's spirit, and make him uneasy under his confinement. It is sad that there should be men who profess the gospel, especially who preach it, and yet are governed by such principles. However, others were animated by Paul's sufferings to preach Christ the more vigorously, that the work might not stand while the workman was laid up. This made them more bold to preach, and supply his lack of service to the church.

How execrable the temper of those who preached Christ out of envy and

contention, and managed a ministry which should have breathed nothing but love, with a view of adding affliction to those bonds that oppressed this best of men! But how generous and amiable the disposition which the apostle evinces when he rejoices that Christ was preached, though the purposes towards him were so unkind.—(80.)

It is affecting to see how easy the apostle was in the midst of all, ver. 18. Notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence or in truth, Christ is preached, I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice. The preaching of Christ is the joy of all who wish well to his kingdom among men. Since it may tend to the good of many, we ought to rejoice. It is for God to judge of the principles men act upon; this is out of our line.

The apostle rejoices in the preaching the gospel. 1. Because it tended to the salvation of the souls of men, ver. 19. He knew that these afflictive dispensations would help forward his final salvation, through the prayer of his brethren, and the communication of the Spirit of Christ to his soul, to promote his humility and spirituality. This satisfied him, since he was willing to endure any abasement or suffering for the honour of Christ. Whatever turns to our salvation, is by the supply of the Spirit of Christ; and prayer is the appointed means of seeking for that supply. The prayers of the people may bring a supply of the Spirit to their ministers, to strengthen them for suffering, as well as preaching the gospel.

2. Because it would be to the glory of Christ, ver. 20. The great desire of every true christian is, that Christ's name may be great, and his kingdom come. He expected a happy issue of his trials, as one who looks for some beloved friend. And he confidently hoped that he should not be disappointed; but that, as in all former instances he had boldly and successfully stood his ground; so in this present case he should be strengthened and inspired with courage, that Christ might be magnified in and by his frail body; whether his life should be spared that he might again labour in spreading the gospel, or whether he should be called to shed his blood in confirmation of his testimony.

When we consider that the Lord worketh all things according to the counsel

of his own will, we should be reconciled to the afflicting dispensations which seem to shut us out from usefulness. Our earnest expectation and hope should not be, to be honoured of men, or to escape the cross, but to be so upheld amidst temptation, contempt, and affliction, that we may not be put to shame, or disgrace the cause of God; but may act with boldness and constancy. Let us refer it to Christ, which way he will make us serviceable to his glory, whether by labour or suffering; by diligence or patience; by living to his honour in working for him, or dying to his honour in suffering for him.

19. Some would refer this to a temporal deliverance, but *Doddridge* observes that such an event could not be said to proceed from the supply of the Spirit of Christ.

Ver. 21—26. In the most animated manner the apostle here declares the happy frame of his mind in his dangerous situation. Christ was his life, and death would be his gain. As Christ was the author and support of his spiritual life, so he was the end and object of his life on earth. He had no business, interest, honour, or pleasure for which to live, but the glory, service, and favour of Christ. Therefore to die would be his greatest gain, as he would then more perfectly know and enjoy the favour of his gracious Lord, and have done with sin, temptation, and suffering for ever. The christian life is derived from Christ, and directed to him. All those to whom to live is Christ, to them to die will be gain, everlasting gain. Death is a great loss to a carnal worldly man; he loses all his earthly comforts and all his hopes; but to a true believer it is gain, for it is the end of all his weakness and misery, and the perfecting of his comforts, and accomplishment of his hopes; it delivers him from all the evils of life, and brings to the possession of the chief good.

It might be thought, if death was gain to the apostle, he would be weary of life, and impatient for death. No, ver. 22, his labour was well bestowed, if he could be instrumental to advance the kingdom of Christ in the world. If he continued to live in the flesh, and to endure hardships a little longer, his labour would produce good to himself as well as to others. Yet he knew not

which he should choose, if it were left to him, being drawn both ways by the reasons he had to desire life on the one hand, and death on the other. Paul's strait was not between living in this world and living in heaven,—between these two there is no comparison whatever; but between serving Christ in this world and enjoying him in another. It was a blessed strait which Paul was in, not between two evil things but between two good things—living to Christ and being with him. His inclination was rather for death. See the power of faith and of Divine grace; it can make us willing to die, ver. 23, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ. *Observe, it is being with Christ, which makes a departure desirable to a good man. Dying, or putting off the body, is not of itself a desirable thing; but it may be connected with something else, which will make it truly so. If I cannot be with Christ without departing, I shall reckon it desirable on that account to depart. As soon as the soul departs, it is immediately with Christ. Absent from the body, and present with the Lord, 2 Cor. 5. 8. Which is far better. Those who know the value of Christ and heaven, will readily acknowledge it far better to be in heaven than to be in this world, to be with Christ than to be with any creature. In this world we are compassed about with sin; but if we come to be with Christ, we escape sin and temptation, sorrow and death for ever.

His judgment was, to live longer in this world, for the service of the church, ver. 24. It is needful for the church to have ministers; and faithful ministers can ill be spared, when the harvest is plentiful and the labourers few. Those who have most reason to desire to depart, should be willing to continue in the world as long as God has any work for them to do. He had confidence in the Divine Providence, that it would order all for the best to him, verse 25, and whatsoever is best for the church, we may be sure God will do. What promotes our faith and joy of faith, is very much for our furtherance in the way to heaven. The more faith, the more joy; and the more faith and joy, the more we are furthered in our christian course. All our joys should terminate in Christ, ver. 26. Our joy in good ministers should be our joy in

Christ Jesus for them; for they are only his friends, and are to be received in his name, and for his sake.

And the more unexpected mercies are before they come, the more of God will be seen in them, and the more of joy in God will be because of them, when they come. Paul being prisoner at Rome, and his delivery almost hopeless, their rejoicing was to be the more abundant in Jesus Christ, by his coming to them again.—(79 f.)

22. "But whether this living in the flesh be profitable for me, or what I shall choose, I know not."—*Scholefield.*

23. This plainly proves that the separate spirits of good men are with Christ, in such a manner that their state is far better than while they continue in this present world, which a state of insensibility cannot possibly be. But *Planning* justly observes that it will not at all disprove that large accession of happiness after the resurrection, which other scriptures plainly declare.—*Doddridge* He says, the original "far better," is very emphatical, and he knows not how to imitate the sense so well, as by rendering it "better beyond all expression."

Ver 27—30. The apostle exhorts to strictness of conversation, ver. 27. Those who profess the gospel of Christ, should have their conversation as becomes the gospel. Let it be as becomes those who believe gospel truths, submit to gospel laws, and depend upon gospel promises; and with an answerable faith, holiness, and comfort. Let it be in all respects as those who belong to the kingdom of God among men, and are members and subjects of it. The original word denotes the conduct of citizens when answerable to their privileges, and for the credit, safety, peace, and prosperity of their city. He had spoken of his coming to them again, with some assurance, though now a prisoner; but he would not have them build upon that. Whether ministers come or not, Christ is always at hand.

It becomes those who profess the gospel, to strive for it. There is that in the faith of the gospel, which is worth striving for. If religion is worth any thing, it is worth every thing. There is much opposition, and there is need of striving. A man may sleep and go to hell; but he who will go to heaven must look about him and be diligent. The unity and unanimity of christians become the gospel. Strive together, not strive one with another. One spirit and one mind become the gospel. There

may be a oneness of heart and affection among christians, where there is a diversity of judgment and apprehensions about many things. Steadfastness becomes the gospel. It is a shame to religion when the professors of it are unfixed in their minds, for such will never excel. Here is an exhortation to courage and constancy in suffering, ver. 28. Whatever oppositions we meet with, we must consider that the condition of the persecuted is much better and more desirable than that of the persecutors.

Be not intimidated in any thing by your adversaries; for though they look upon your attachment to the gospel as an undoubted proof of your utter ruin, yet to you it is a demonstration of a salvation which has God for its author.—(33.)

Two precious gifts are given, ver. 29. and both on the behalf of Christ. 1. To believe in him. Faith is God's gift on the behalf of Christ, who purchased for us, not only the blessedness which is the object of faith, but the grace of faith itself; the ability and disposition to believe is from God. 2. To suffer for the sake of Christ, is a valuable gift also; it is a great honour and a great advantage; we may be very serviceable to the glory of God, which is the end of our creation, and encourage and confirm the faith of others. And if we suffer reproach and loss for Christ, we are to reckon it a gift, and prize it accordingly. Yet it is not simply the suffering, but the cause; and not only the cause, but the spirit, which makes the martyr. A man may suffer in an ill cause, and then he suffers justly; or in a good cause, but with a wrong mind, and then his sufferings lose their value.

Whatever our stations may be, whether in public or in private life, let it be our care, in every circumstance and relation, that our conduct may become the gospel; that we may adorn so holy a profession, and answer so glorious a hope. If opposition arise, let it not terrify us. It will, if well supported, be a token of salvation, and that of God. Let us account it an honour, and a gift of the Divine favour to us, to be called and strengthened to suffer for his sake.—(80.)

And note that this salvation should not be ascribed to bodily afflictions, as though afflictions and worldly persecutions deserved it, but to God only

is salvation justly to be attributed. It shows that faith and patience are gifts of God.—(58.)

CHAPTER II.

Here are exhortations to a harmonious, kind, and humble spirit and behaviour, enforced by various arguments, ver. 1—4, particularly by the example of Christ, 5—11. To diligence in the affairs of their salvation, in consideration of God's working in them, 12, 13. To be exemplary and instructive to the world, and a comfort to the apostle, 14—18. And he assures them of his desire, hope, and purpose of making them a visit; and in the meanwhile of sending to them Timothy and Epaphroditus, both of whom he recommends to their kind and honourable regards, 19—30.

Ver. 1—4. Here are further exhortations to christian duties; to like-mindedness and lowly-mindedness, in conformity to the Lord Jesus, the great example of humility and love. The great gospel precept pressed upon us is, to love one another. This is the law of Christ's kingdom, the lesson of his school, the livery of his family. This is represented, ver. 2, by being like-minded. Christians should be one in affection, whether one in apprehension or not. This is always in their power, and always their duty, and likely to bring them nearer in judgment. Having the same love, Christian love ought to be mutual. Being of one accord, and of one mind; not crossing and pressing on their separate interests; but agreeing in the great things of God, and keeping the unity of the Spirit amidst other differences.

The inducements to brotherly love mentioned are several: 1. If there is any consolation in Christ. Have you experienced consolation in Christ? Show forth that experience by loving one another. Do we expect consolation in Christ? If we would not be disappointed, we must love one another. 2. Comfort of love. If there is any comfort in God's love to you, in your love to God, or in your brethren's love, be ye like-minded, abound in it. 3. Fellowship of the Spirit. If there is such a thing as communion with God and Christ by the Spirit, such a thing as the communion of saints, by their being animated and actuated by one and the same Spirit; be ye like-minded: for christian love

and like-mindedness will preserve to us our communion with God, and with one another. If ye expect the benefit of God's compassions to yourselves, be compassionate one to another. If there is mercy to be found among the followers of Christ, if all who are sanctified have a disposition to holy pity; make it appear this way. How strong are these arguments! Surely, enough to tame the most fierce, and to soften the hardest heart. The expressions are varied to include all that can be imagined in the most cordial friendship, unity, and sympathy. Fulfil ye my joy. It is the joy of ministers to see people like-minded, and living in love.

Here are means to promote christian love. 1. Do nothing through strife and vain-glory. There is no greater enemy to christian love than pride and passion. If we do things in contradiction to our brethren, that is doing them through strife; if we do them through ostentation of ourselves, that is doing them through vain-glory. Christ came to slay all enmities; let there not be among christians a spirit of opposition. Christ came to humble us, therefore let there not be among us a spirit of pride. 2. We must esteem others in lowliness of mind better than ourselves; be severe upon our own faults, and quick in observing our own defects, but ready to overlook, and make favourable allowances for others. 3. We must interest ourselves in the concerns of others, not in curiosity and censoriousness, or as busy-bodies in other men's matters, but in christian love and sympathy, ver. 4. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. A selfish spirit is destructive of christian love. We must be concerned, not only for our own credit, and ease, and safety, but for those of others also; and rejoice in their prosperity. We must love our neighbour as ourselves, and make his case our own. Neither inward, nor outward peace can be enjoyed, excepting as in lowliness of mind we esteem others better than ourselves, and look at the things of others as well as our own. These are hard lessons to man's proud carnal heart. Many have learned doctrines very accurately, who know nothing of this practical instruction, and we cannot study this subject successfully, but by continually looking unto Jesus.

Ver. 5—11. Here is the example of our Lord Jesus Christ proposed to our imitation, ver. 5. We must bear a resemblance to his life, if we would have the benefit of his death. If we have not the Spirit of Christ, we are none of his, Rom. 8. 9. He was eminently humble, and this we are peculiarly to learn of him, Matt. 11. 29. We must walk in the same spirit and in the same steps with the Lord Jesus, who humbled himself to suffering and death for us; not only to satisfy God's justice, and pay the price of our redemption, but to set us an example.

1. Notice the two natures of Christ: his Divine nature, and human nature.

As to his Divine nature; Who, being in the form of God, ver. 6, partaking the Divine nature, as the eternal and only-begotten Son of God, John 1. 1. It is of the same import with the Image of the invisible God, Col. 1. 15, the Brightness of his glory, and express Image of his person, Heb. 1. 3. He thought it no robbery to be equal with God; did not think himself guilty of any invasion of what did not belong to him, or assuming another's right. He said, I and my Father are one, John 10. 30. It would be the highest degree of robbery for any mere man to pretend to be equal with God, to profess himself one with the Father. He had manifested himself as Jehovah to patriarchs, prophets, and to the Jewish church, through successive ages; and he had not thought it a robbery to be equal with God, and to receive Divine adoration from men.

His human nature is noticed; he was made in the likeness of men, and found in fashion as a man. He was really and truly man; took part of our flesh and blood; appeared in the nature and habit of man. And he voluntarily assumed human nature; it was his own act, and by his own consent. We cannot say that our participation of the human nature is so. Herein he emptied himself; divested himself of the honours and glories of the upper world, and of his former appearance, to clothe himself with human nature, Heb. 2. 17, and became like us in all things but sin. Thus low, of his own will, he stooped from that glory which he had with the Father before the world was. The example can never sufficiently be set forth by words, and our most earnest endea-

vours to imitate it must necessarily fall infinitely short of it.

2. Christ's two estates, of humiliation and exaltation, are noticed.

His state of humiliation. Christ not only took upon him the likeness and fashion, or form of a man, but of a low estate. Not that of a Prince, and appearing in splendour, but quite the contrary. His whole life was a life of humiliation, persecution, poverty, and suffering. He had not where to lay his head, lived upon alms, was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. This was the humiliation of his life. But the lowest step of his humiliation was his dying the death of the cross. He not only suffered, but by his own will was obedient; he obeyed the law which he brought himself under as Mediator, and by which he engaged to die, John 10. 18. And he was made under the law, as our Surety, and fulfilled all righteousness amidst the severest difficulties and temptations. Gal. 4. 4. There is an emphasis laid upon the manner of Christ's dying, which had in it all the circumstances possible which are humbling; even the death of the cross; a cursed, painful, and shameful death; a death accursed by the law; full of pain; the death of a malefactor and a slave, not of a free-man; exposed as a public spectacle! Such was the condescension of the blessed Jesus. The eternal Word and Son of God, having fulfilled his engagements as our Surety in the flesh, God the Father most highly exalted him in our nature, by placing him on the mediatorial throne.

His state of exaltation; Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him. He exalted his own Person, the human nature as well as the Divine. As respects the Divine nature, it could only be the display and appearance of the glory he had with the Father before the world was, John 17. 5; not any new acquisition of glory. The exaltation was of Christ's human nature, which alone seems capable of it, though in conjunction with the Divine. His exaltation here consists in honour and power. In honour; so he had a name above every name; a title of dignity above all the creatures, men or angels. And in power. Every knee must bow to him. The whole creation must be subject to him; the inhabitants of heaven and earth, At

the name of Jesus; not the mere sound of the word, but the authority of Jesus, all should pay solemn homage. And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord; every nation and language should publicly own the universal empire of the exalted Redeemer; and that all power in heaven and earth is given to him, Matt. 28. 18.

Observe the vast extent of the kingdom of Christ; heaven and earth, and all the creatures in each; angels as well as men, the dead as well as the living. To the glory of God the Father. It is to the glory of God the Father, to confess that Jesus Christ is Lord; for it is his will, that all men should honour the Son as they honour the Father, John 5. 23. Whatever respect is paid to Christ, honours the Father, Matt. 10. 40.

In contemplating the voluntary abasement and the exaltation of Christ, we see such obligations and motives to self-denying love as the whole universe besides cannot supply. We learn to humble ourselves that we may be exalted, to serve others in order to our best interest, and to labour and suffer reproach that we may secure honour and eternal life. But as all must submit to Christ, and confess him to be Lord, let us examine whether we thus love and obey the Son of God, or whether we are among those enemies who must be bruised under his feet shortly.

6. Much has been said respecting this passage in the controversy respecting the Divinity of our Lord. The word translated "robbery," *J. P. Smith* would render, with many of the fathers, "an object to be caught at," considering the sense to be—that our Lord did not ostentatiously show or glory and boast of his being equal with God. He adds, "Whether this allusion be admitted or not, is of little importance; as in any case the idea is plainly indicated, that the object intended would not have been, to Jesus Christ, an act of seizure, a usurpation, a thing to which he had no right; but on the contrary that to which he had a just claim, to waive which is shown by this passage to have been an act of the most gracious condescension and humiliation." "In the form of God," *J. P. Smith* considers may be expressed as having the characteristics of God. He observes that with respect to this contrast, if the characteristics of human nature mark the Saviour incontrovertibly to be man, so the distinguishing characteristics of God must denote that which is peculiar and distinctive to the Divine Being.

Doddridge paraphrases, "Thought it not robbery and usurpation to be and appear as God."—"Did not covet to appear as God." *Whitby*; who shows that this rendering gives no advantage to those who oppose the Divinity of Christ, but equally counts them.

7. "He emptied himself." The idea is that of reduction from a previous state of fulness or excellency, referring to a pre-existent state of dignity and glory.—*J. P. Smith.* "He brought himself from all things as it were to nothing."—*Reformers' Bible.*

8. "He humbled himself." *J. P. Smith* considers this to be understood in the sense of the Old Testament phrase "to afflict the soul," an expression applied to persons who underwent voluntary sufferings from religious motives. He remarks upon all the parts of this passage, "that under every variety of fair interpretation, none appears tenable which does not recognise a nature in the Messiah distinct from the human—pre-existent, superior to all that is glorious and excellent in dependent existence, and really Divine." "This passage shows that the human nature of Jesus Christ is described by such terms, and in such connexion of argument, as implies a superior, pre-existent, and Divine nature, equally belonging to him in fact, and equally necessary to the constitution of his Person as a competent Saviour to the human race."

Ver. 12, 13. Work out your own salvation. Observe, it concerns us above all things to secure the welfare of our souls. Our own salvation, the salvation of our own souls. It is not for us to judge others; we have enough to do to look to ourselves: and though we must promote the common salvation, Jude 3, as much as we can, yet we must upon no account neglect our own. We are required to work out our salvation. The word signifies working thoroughly, and taking true pains. We must be diligent in the use of all the means which conduce to our salvation, persevering therein to the end. With fear and trembling, that is, with great care and circumspection; with fear lest under all our advantages we should so much as seem to come short. This is urged from the consideration of their readiness always to obey the gospel. They were not merely awed by the apostle's presence, but obeyed even much more in his absence. And because it is God who worketh in you, do ye work out your salvation: for it is God who worketh in you. Work, for he worketh. It encourages us to do our utmost, because our labour shall not be in vain. He desired that they should now, in his absence, labour diligently in all things connected with their assurance of salvation, and their more complete deliverance from the power of sin, by the renewal of their souls to holiness.

Observe, Though we must use our utmost endeavours in working out our salvation, yet still we must go forth, and

go on, in dependence upon the grace of God. His grace works in us; and the operations of God's grace in us are so far from excusing, that they are intended to quicken and engage our endeavours. He worketh in you. All our working depends upon his working in us. Do not trifle with God by neglects and delays, lest all your endeavours prove in vain. It is the grace of God which inclines the will to that which is good; and then enables us to perform it. Thou hast wrought all our works in us, Isa. 26. 12. Of his good pleasure. As there is no strength in us, so there is no merit in us. As we cannot act without God's grace, so we cannot claim it, or pretend to deserve it. God's good will to us, is the cause of his good work in us; and he is under no engagements to his creatures, but those of his gracious promise. He was even then working in them that willingness to repent, believe, and obey, of which they were conscious; and that ability to carry their good desires into effect, which their past conduct evinced.

12. Our health (salvation) hangeth not on our works, yet are they said to work out their health who do run in the race of justice, (righteousness,) for although we be saved freely in Christ by faith, yet must we walk by the way of justice unto our health.—*Bishops' Bible.*

13. Work, for he works. There were no working to any purpose, or with any hope, if he did not work. And work with fear and trembling, for God works of his own good pleasure; as if he had said, It were the greatest folly imaginable to trifle with one who works at such perfect liberty, under no obligation, who may desist when he will; to impose upon a Being so absolutely sovereign, who owes you nothing; and from whose former gracious operations not complied with you can draw no argument unto any following ones, that because He doth, therefore He will. I cannot be sure, because he now darts in light upon me, is now convincing me, now awaking me, that therefore he will still do so, again and again. Upon this ground then, what exhortation could be more proper than, "Work out your salvation with fear and trembling." What could be more awfully monitory and enforcing of it, than that he works only of mere good will and pleasure? How should I tremble to think, that if I should be negligent or undutiful that he may let the work fall, and me perish!—Such is in itself a most deplorable case much lamented by our Lord Jesus himself, so that touching it, there is no place for doubt. See Luke 19. 41, 42.—*Hove.*

Ver. 14—18. Here are exhortations to adorn the christian profession by a suitable temper and behaviour. By cheerful obedience to the commands of God, ver. 14. Do all things, do your duty in every branch of it, without murmurings. Do it,

and do not find fault with it. Mind your work, and do not quarrel with it. God's commands were given to be obeyed, not to be disputed. By peaceableness, and love one to another. Do all things without disputings, wrangling, or debating one with another; the light of truth and the life of religion are often lost in the heats and mists of disputation. By blameless conversation towards all men. ver. 15. That ye give no just occasion of offence. Not only be harmless, but be blameless; not only do no hurt, but come not under just suspicion of it. Blameless before men, sincere toward God. The sons of God. The children of God should differ from the sons of men. Without rebuke, so that none may have occasion to cavil, that the severest censurer may find no fault with you. We should endeavour not only to get to heaven, but to get thither without a blot. In the midst of a crooked and perverse generation. Where there is no true religion, little is to be expected but crookedness and perverseness; and the more perverse others are, among whom we live, and the more apt to cavil, the more careful we should be to keep ourselves blameless and harmless, see Gen. 13. 7. Among whom ye shine as lights in the world. Christ is the Light of the world, and real christians are lights in the world. When God raises up a good man in any place, he sets up a light there, Matt. 5. 16. Christians should not only approve themselves to God, but recommend themselves to others, that they may also glorify God. They must shine as well as be sincere. The doctrine and example of consistent believers will tend to enlighten others, and to direct their way to Christ and holiness, even as the light-house warns mariners to avoid rocks, and directs their course into the harbour. Let us endeavour to shine thus.

Holding forth the word of life, ver. 16. The gospel is the word of life, it reveals to us eternal life through Jesus Christ, 2 Tim. 1. 10. It is our duty, not only to hold it fast for our own benefit, but to hold it forth for the benefit of others. This would be the apostle's joy; not only to rejoice in their steadfastness, but in their usefulness. Running denotes vehemence and vigour, and continual pressing forward; labouring denotes constancy, and close application. It is a great joy to ministers, when they perceive that

they have not run in vain nor laboured in vain; and it will be their rejoicing in the day of Christ, when their converts will be their crown, 1 Thess. 2. 19.

The apostle not only laboured for them with satisfaction, but was ready to suffer for their good, ver. 17. He would reckon himself happy, if he could promote the honour of Christ, the edification of the church, and the welfare of the souls of men; though by hazarding, and even by laying down his life, as a sacrifice at their altars, to serve the faith of God's elect. Could Paul think it worth while to shed his blood for the service of the church; and is not that worth our labour, which he thought to be worth his life? He could rejoice to seal his doctrine with his blood, ver. 18. He would not have them troubled for him, but rather rejoice with him as a very happy man, even in his imprisonment, and in the prospect of a violent death. It is the will of God that believers should be much in rejoicing; and those who are happy in good ministers, have great reason to joy and rejoice with them. If the minister loves the people, and desires to spend and be spent for their welfare, the people have reason to love the minister, and to joy and rejoice with him.

17. "But even if I be poured out!"—*Scholefield*. Here plainly is an allusion to the libation or drink-offering poured out on the sacrifice, as customary among the ancients.

Ver. 19—30. The apostle speaks of Timothy, whom he intended to send to the Philippians. He was in pain, when he had not heard of them a good while, and therefore would send Timothy to inquire, and bring him an account. There were, no doubt, many good ministers, who cared for the souls of those to whom they preached; but none comparable to Timothy; a man of an excellent spirit and tender heart. It is best with us, when our duty becomes in a manner natural to us. Naturally, that is, sincerely, and not in pretence only; with a willing heart and upright view. It is the duty of ministers to care for the state of their people, and be concerned for their welfare; such are distinguished among the brethren.

All seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's, ver. 21. Was there so general a corruption so early? Seeking our own interest, with neglect of Jesus Christ, is a great sin, very common among christians and ministers.

We are apt to prefer our own credit, ease, and safety, before truth, holiness, and duty; the things of our own pleasure and reputation before the things of Christ's kingdom: but Timothy did not so.

The Lord, by putting professors upon hazardous, troublesome, and expensive employments for Christ, discovers often in many too much love to self, and too little love to Christ, which otherwise would have lain undiscovered; so the proposal of a long journey to Philippi discovered in most of Paul's companions that they sought their own things, and not the things of Christ.—(79 f)

Timothy had been tried, 2 Tim. 4. 5, and was faithful. All the churches with whom he had acquaintance, knew the proof of him; that, as a son with a father, he hath served me in the gospel. He was Paul's assistant in many places, and served with all the dutiful respect a child pays to a father, and all the love and cheerfulness with which a child is serviceable to his father. Their ministrations were with great respect on the one side, and great tenderness and kindness on the other—an admirable example to elder and younger ministers, joined together in the same service.

Paul designed to send him shortly, ver. 23. He was now a prisoner, and did not know what would be the issue; but, as it issued, he would dispose of Timothy. He hoped to come himself, ver. 24. Paul desired his liberty, not that he might take his pleasure, but that he might do good. He expresses his hope and confidence of seeing them, with humble dependence and submission to the Divine will, James 4. 15.

He speaks concerning Epaphroditus, his christian brother, to whom he bore a tender affection, as his companion in the work and sufferings of the gospel, who submitted to the same labours and hardships with himself, and their messenger, one sent by them to him for his relief. The gospel inspires an ingenuous spirit. The most eminent ministers, who have learned entirely to trust the Lord Jesus will acknowledge their obligations to others, to those who learned the glad tidings of salvation through their labours of love.

Epaphroditus had been sick, ver. 26. And nigh unto death, ver. 27. Sickness is a calamity common to men, to good men and ministers. But why did not the

apostle heal him, being indued with a power of curing diseases, as well as raising the dead? Acts 20. 10. Probably because that was intended as a sign to others, and to confirm the truth of the gospel. They had not that power at their own discretion, but only when some end was to be served by it, when God saw fit.

The Philippians were exceedingly sorry to hear of his sickness, and it pleased God to recover and spare him, ver. 27. Though the church was blessed at that time with extraordinary gifts, they could even then ill spare a good minister. The apostle was sensibly touched with the thoughts of so great a loss; it would have been fresh grief to him.

Epaphroditus was willing to go to the Philippians, that he might be comforted with those who had sorrowed for him when he was sick, ver. 28; and Paul recommends him to their affection: account such valuable, who are zealous and faithful; let them be highly regarded. It seems, his illness was caused by the work of God; it was for the work of Christ that he was nigh to death, and to supply their lack of service to him, in supplying their places. The apostle does not blame Epaphroditus for hazarding his life, but urges them to love him the more on that account. Those who truly love Christ, will think it well worth while to hazard health and life, to promote the good of his church. They were to receive him with joy, as newly recovered. It is an endearing consideration to have our mercies restored by God after great danger of their removal; and should make them more valued and improved. What is given us in answer to prayer, should be received with great thankfulness and joy.

We are to learn also, that sickness may overtake, yea, death itself may meet the faithful ministers and servants of Christ, when engaged in his own work. Had Epaphroditus met with death while thus employed he had been happy, for, Blessed are they that die in the work of the Lord, they shall rest from their labours, and their works shall follow them.—(73.)

20. From the expression here used we may gather that Timothy had been with Paul at Philippi. This is not directly stated, but we find from Acts 16. 11. and 17. 14, that Timothy was with the apostle at the beginning of the journey in which the latter visited Philippi and also at Berea, after he had left that city.—*Paley*.

CHAPTER III.

The apostle cautions the Philippians against judaizing false teachers, whom he describes, as he also does true christians in opposition to them, ver. 1—3. Recites his own former privileges, and renounces all these for Christ, 4—8. Expresses his earnest desire to be found in him, and his pressing on toward perfection, 9—14. And recommends his own example to the imitation of other believers, in opposition to the behaviour of carnal professors, 15—21.

Ver. 1—3. It is the character and temper of sincere christians to rejoice in Christ Jesus. The more we take the comfort of our religion, the more closely we cleave to it: the more we rejoice in Christ, the more willing we shall be to do and suffer for him, and the less danger we shall be in of being drawn away from him. The joy of the Lord is our strength, Neh. 8. 10. He cautions them to take heed of false judaizing teachers. Ministers must not think any thing grievous, which they have reason to believe is safe and edifying to the people. It is good for us often to hear the same truths, to revive the remembrance, and strengthen the impression of things of importance.

The prophet calls the false prophets dumb dogs, Isa. 56. 10; to which the apostle seems to refer, ver. 2. Dogs, for their malice against the faithful professors of the gospel of Christ, barking at them and biting them. They urged good works in opposition to the faith of Christ; but Paul calls them evil workers: they boasted to be the circumcision; but he calls them the concision: they rent the church of Christ, and cut it to pieces.

He describes true christians, who are the spiritual circumcision; the peculiar people of God, who are in covenant with him. They worshipped in the spirit, not in the carnal ordinances of the Old Testament, which consisted in meats and drinks and divers washings. Christianity takes us from these things, and teaches us to worship God in spirit, John 4. 24. The work of religion is to no purpose, any further than the heart is employed in it, and we must worship God in the strength and grace of the Divine Spirit, which is so peculiar to the gospel state; that is the ministration of the Spirit, 2 Cor. 3. 8. They rejoice in Christ Jesus, not in the peculiar privileges of the Jewish church, or what resembles them in the Christian church—mere outward en-

joyments and performances. They rejoice in their relation to Christ, and interest in him. Now that the substance is come, the shadows are done away, and we are to rejoice in Christ Jesus only. They have no confidence in the flesh, the carnal ordinances and outward performances. We must build only on Jesus Christ, the everlasting Foundation. Our confidence, as well as our joy, is only in him. We should be zealous of good works, but must rejoice in the Lord Jesus Christ alone. Nor can we too earnestly guard against those who oppose or abuse the doctrine of free salvation.

2. *Doddridge* thus paraphrases. "Beware of the concision, for such I must call that body of men which proudly usurps the name of the circumcision: whereas the external rite they so much contend for, is but an unprofitable cutting and mangling of the flesh, when performed from such principles, and imposed in such a temper:—it may seem an emblem of the cruel manner in which they cut and mangle the church."

— The expression *concision*, seems used to denote those who maintained the necessity of circumcision, which is styled *concision*, or *mangling*, by way of contempt.—*Blumfield*.

Ver. 4—8. The apostle shows what he had to boast of as a Jew and a Pharisee. Let none think that the apostle despised these things, because he had them not himself to glory in. If he would have gloried and trusted in the flesh, he had as much cause to do so as any man. He was not a proselyte, but a true Israelite; of the stock of Israel. And he was of the tribe of Benjamin, in which tribe the temple stood, and which adhered to Judah when all the other tribes revolted. A Hebrew of the Hebrews, an Israelite on both sides, by father and mother, and from one generation to another; none of his ancestors had inter-married with Gentiles. He could boast of his relation to the church and the covenant; he had the token of God's covenant in his flesh, and was circumcised the very day which God had appointed. For learning, he was a Pharisee, brought up at the feet of an eminent doctor of the law: and was a scholar instructed in all the learning of the Jews, Acts 22. 3. After the most strict sect of his religion he lived a Pharisee, Acts 26. 5. As he made a strict profession under the title and character of a Pharisee, so he persecuted those whom he looked upon as enemies. Concerning zeal, persecuting the church. He showed that he was in earnest, though it was a

zeal without knowledge which directed and governed its exercise. Touching the righteousness which is of the law, he was blameless. As far as the pharisees' exposition of the law went, and as to the mere letter of the law, and outward observance, he could not be accused by any. But the apostle declares how little account he made of these, in comparison with his interest in Christ, and his expectations from him, ver. 7. Those things which he had counted gain while a pharisee, and which he had before reckoned up, those he counted loss for Christ. He counted them loss; not only insufficient to enrich him, but what would certainly impoverish and ruin him, if he trusted to them, in opposition to Christ. Observe, the apostle did not persuade them to do any thing but what he himself did; to quit any thing but what he had quitted himself; or to venture on any thing but what he himself ventured with immortal soul upon.

Not only did Paul thus judge concerning his righteousness according to the law, and the worldly prospects connected with it, but after many years spent in successful labours for the gospel, severe sufferings, and exemplary holiness, he deemed all these things to be but loss, in comparison of the knowledge of Christ, by faith in his person and salvation. He counted all these things worthless in comparison of Christ.

He tells us what he was ambitious of, and reached after, ver. 8. It was the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord; a believing experimental acquaintance with Christ as Lord; not a mere notional and speculative, but a practical and efficacious knowledge of him. There is abundant excellency in the doctrine of Christ, above all the knowledge of nature, and improvements of human wisdom; for it is suited to the case of fallen sinners, and furnishes them with all they need, and all they can desire and hope for, with all saving wisdom and saving grace.

He had spoken before of his Jewish privileges; here he speaks of all things, all worldly enjoyments and outward privileges whatsoever, which could stand in competition with Christ for the throne in his heart, or pretend to merit and desert. There, he had said that he did count them but loss; but it might be said, It is easy to say so; but what

would he do when he came to the trial? He tells us, that he had himself practised according to this estimate of the case; For whom I have suffered the loss of all things. He had quitted all his honours and advantages, as a Jew and a pharisee, and submitted to all the disgrace and suffering which attended the profession and preaching of the gospel. He ventured all in it, and suffered the loss of all for the privileges of a Christian. Nay, he not only counted them loss, but the vilest refuse—offals thrown to dogs; they are not only less valuable than Christ, but in the highest degree contemptible, when in competition with him.

Note here, what true knowledge of Christ does. It alters and changes men, their judgments and manners, and makes them as if made again anew, and to condemn the works they before esteemed and judged to be good works. The believer prefers Christ and the knowledge of him, above all riches or treasures of this world, showing that it is better for us to be without all worldly riches, than without Christ and his word.--(58.)

Thus the true Christian worships God in the Spirit, rejoices in Christ Jesus, and confides in nothing of which the unregenerate are capable. How far short do many, who have confidence in the flesh, come of Saul the persecutor! Their birth of Christian parents, their baptism, and their form of godliness, can scarcely be imagined superior to his distinctions of a like nature, and where is their strict morality and their zeal? Yet still they trust in their scanty or pretended works and forms, and deem them too valuable to exchange for Christ and his salvation.

Ver. 9—14. We have heard what the apostle renounced; let us now see what he laid hold on, and resolved to cleave to, and that was, Christ and heaven.

1. He desired to win Christ; and an unspeakable gainer he would reckon himself, if he had an interest in Christ and his righteousness, and if Christ became his Lord and his Saviour. The expression intimates that we have need to strive for him, and reach after him.

That he might be found in him, ver. 9. In the hour of death and at the day of judgment, as Noah in the ark, as the manslayer was found in the city of refuge, where he was safe from the avenger of blood, Numb. 35. 25. We

are undone without a righteousness, wherein to appear before God, for we are guilty. There is a righteousness provided for us in Jesus Christ, and it is a complete and perfect righteousness. None can have interest or benefit by it, who have confidence in themselves. Not having my own righteousness, which is of the law; not thinking that my outward observances and good deeds are able to atone for my bad ones; or that by setting the one over against the other, I can come to balance accounts with God. The righteousness which I depend upon, is that which is through the faith of Christ. The righteousness which is of God by faith, ordained and appointed of God. The Lord Jesus Christ is the Lord our Righteousness, Isa. 45. 24. Had he not been God, he could not have been our Righteousness. The transcendent excellence of the Divine nature put such value upon, and such virtue into his sufferings, that they became sufficient to satisfy for the sins of the world, and to bring in a righteousness effectual to all who believe. Faith is the ordained means of actual interest and saving benefit in all the purchase of his blood. It is by faith in his blood, Rom. 3. 25.

That he might know Christ, ver. 10. Knowing him here, is believing in him: it is an experimental knowledge of the power of his resurrection, and fellowship of his suffering, or feeling the transforming efficacy and virtue of them. He was as desirous to know the power of Christ's death and resurrection, killing sin in him, and raising up to newness of life, as to receive the benefit of Christ's death and resurrection in his justification.

That he might be conformable unto him. We are made conformable to Christ's death, when we die to sin, as he died for sin, when we are crucified with Christ, the flesh and the affections of it mortified, and the world is crucified to us, and we to the world, by virtue of the cross of Christ. This is our conformity to his death.

The apostle had his heart upon heaven, as his happiness, ver. 11. The happiness of heaven is here called the resurrection of the dead, because the happiness of saints will not be complete till the resurrection at the last day, when the soul and the body shall be glorified together. The resurrection sometimes signifies the future state. This the apostle looked to;

this he would attain. There will be a resurrection of the unjust, who shall arise to shame and everlasting contempt; and our care must be, to escape that: but the joyful and glorious resurrection of saints is called the resurrection, because it is in virtue of Christ's resurrection, as their Head and First-fruits; while the wicked shall rise only by the power of Christ, as their Judge. The apostle was willing to do ~~off~~ to suffer any thing to attain that resurrection. This hope and prospect carried him with courage and constancy through all the difficulties in his work. His care to be found in Christ, was in order to his attaining the resurrection of the dead. Paul himself did not hope to attain it through his own merit and righteousness, but through the merit and righteousness of Jesus Christ. That by any means, at any rate, making any sacrifice or bearing any afflictions, he might attain that perfect happiness to which the saints will be admitted at the resurrection, and of which their preceding joys are an anticipation.

This simple dependence and earnestness of soul were not mentioned as if he had attained the prize, or were already perfected in the Saviour's image. The apostle still looks upon himself to be in a state of imperfection and trial; Not as though I had already attained, or were already perfect, ver. 12. The best men will readily own their imperfection in the present state. There is still much wanting in all our duties, and graces, and comforts. Again, Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended, ver. 13. I thus reason with myself. Those who think they have grace enough, give proof that they have little enough, or rather, that they have none at all; because wherever there is true grace, there is desire of more grace, and pressing onward. Observe here, what the apostle did, under this conviction; he pressed forward with vigour. I endeavour to get more grace, and do more good; and never think I have done enough; if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. His laying hold of us is our happiness and salvation. We love him, because he first loved us, 1 John 4. 19; his keeping hold of us is our safety. We are kept by his mighty power, through faith unto salvation, 1 Pet. 1. 5. When Christ laid hold of us, it was to

bring us to heaven; and to apprehend or take hold upon that for which he apprehended us, is to attain the perfection of our bliss. This one thing I do; this was his great care and concern. ver. 13. There is a sinful forgetting of past sins and past mercies: these ought to be remembered for the exercise of constant repentance and thankfulness to God. But he forgot the things which were behind, so as not to be content with past labours or present measures of grace. He reached forth, stretched himself forward towards his point; expressions showing a vehement concern for advancement in conformity to Christ.

See the apostle's aim, ver. 14. As he who runs a race, must never stop short of the end, but press forward as fast as he can, so those who have heaven in their eye, must still press forward to it, in holy desires and hopes, constant endeavours and preparations. Heaven is called here the mark, because it is that to which every good christian looks; as the archer has his eye fixed upon the mark he desires to hit. A christian's calling is a high calling; it is from heaven, as its original, and to heaven in its tendency. Heaven is the prize of the high calling; the prize we fight for, and run for, and wrestle for; what we aim at in all we do, and what will reward all our pains. This is proper to excite our zeal in all our service, and to quicken us every step we take; and it is of God; from him we are to expect it. Eternal life is the gift of God, Rom. 6. 23, but it is in Christ Jesus, through his hand it must come to us, as it is procured for us by him. There is no getting to heaven as our home, but by Christ as our Way. True believers will deem themselves happy in proportion to their assurance of being found in Christ, and made the righteousness of God in him. In seeking this assurance, as well as to glorify him, they will seek for nearer conformity to his sufferings and death, by dying to sin, and by crucifying the flesh with its affections and lusts. At the same time, the love of Christ will constrain them to suffer with him. Thousands and ten thousands have testified that this is the judgment and experience of true christians, nor can any measure of personal holiness or self-denying labours, satisfy those who count all but loss that they may win Christ,

and be justified by faith in Him alone. They are continually humbled for their manifold defects and defilements, and still follow after, to attain that prize for which they were apprehended by the Saviour's preventing grace, when careless sinners or proud formalists. In these things there is great disparity among real christians, but all knew something of them.

12. *Clement Alexandrinus* has these words: "We call martyrdom perfection, not because man receives it at the end, or completion of life; but because it is the consummation of the work of charity," or christian love. Others also use the word here expressing perfection to denote martyrdom.

Ver. 15—21. The apostle shows that believers are agreed to make Christ all in all, and set their hearts upon another world. This is that whereto they have all attained. They may differ about other things, but are agreed that Christ is a christian's all; that to win Christ, and to be found in him, is our happiness both here and hereafter. Therefore let us walk by the same rule, and mind the same thing. Having made Christ our all, to us to live must be Christ. Christians who differ in lesser matters, should bear with one another, because they are agreed in the main matter. If in any thing ye be otherwise minded; if ye differ from one another, and are not of the same judgment as to lesser matters; yet ye must not judge one another, while ye all meet now in Christ as your centre, and hope to meet shortly in heaven as your home. As for other matters of difference, lay no great stress upon them. God shall reveal even this unto you. Whatever it is wherein ye differ, wait till God gives you a better understanding, which he will do in due time. In the mean time; as far as ye have attained, ye must go together in the ways of God, join in all the great things in which ye are agreed, and wait for further light in lesser things wherein ye differ.

The apostle could with confidence call on them to imitate him, and to observe and copy such christians as followed his example; and let us study to walk after the example of apostles and evangelists, that our conduct may be suitable for others to copy with advantage. He warns against following the examples of seducers and evil teachers, ver. 18, 19. Many are called by Christ's name, who yet are enemies to Christ's cross, and its

design and intention. Their walk is a surer evidence what they are than their profession, Matt. 7. 20. The apostle warns against such very frequently. We so little heed warnings given us, that we need to have them repeated. Also feelingly and affectionately; I now tell you weeping. What we say often we may say again, if we say it affectionately, and are ourselves under the power of it. Here are the characters of those who were the enemies of the cross of Christ. Whose God is their belly; they mind nothing but their sensual appetites. They glory in their shame; they not only sinned, but boasted of it. Sin is the sinner's shame, especially when it is gloried in. They mind earthly things. Christ came by his cross to crucify the world to us, and us to the world. Those who mind earthly things, act directly contrary to the cross of Christ, and the great design of it. They set their hearts and affections on earthly things; they love them, and have confidence and complacency in them. To deter us all from the example of such, he reads their doom: Whose end is destruction. Their way seems pleasant, but death and hell are at the end of it. If we choose their way, we have reason to fear their end.

He proposes himself and his brethren for examples, in opposition to those evil examples; For our conversation is in heaven, ver. 20. Their citizenship is there, they are citizens of the New Jerusalem. The life of a christian is in heaven, where his Head is, and his home is, and where he hopes to be shortly; he sets his affections upon things above: and where his heart is, there will his conversation be. The apostle pressed them to follow him, and other ministers of Christ. It good having fellowship with those who have fellowship with Christ, and conversation with those whose conversation is in heaven. Because we look for the Saviour from thence, ver. 20. From whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ. He is not here, he is ascended, and we expect his second coming from thence, to gather all the citizens of that New Jerusalem to himself. Because at his second coming believers expect to be happy and glorified.

Who shall change our vile bodies, that they may be like his glorious body, ver. 21. There is glory reserved for the bodies of the saints, in which they will

be invested at the resurrection. The body is now at the best a vile body, the body of our humiliation; it has its rise and origin from the earth, it is supported out of the earth, and is subject to many diseases, and to death at last, and the christian will regard it as such, instead of idolizing it. And it is often the occasion and instrument of much sin. At the resurrection it will be found a vile body, resolved into rottenness and dust; the dust returns to the earth as it was, Eccl. 12. 7. But it will be made a glorious body; not only raised again to life, but raised to great advantage; which teaches us to mortify the deeds of the body, and to seek the renewal of the soul to a fitness for the heavenly inheritance. The example of this change is, the glorious body of Christ, when he was transfigured upon the mount, Matt. 17. 2. Observe also, the power by which this change will be wrought; according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself, Eph. 1. 19. It is a comfort to us that he can subdue all things unto himself, and sooner or later will do so. And the resurrection will be wrought by this power, John 6. 41. Let this confirm our faith in the resurrection, that we not only have the scriptures, which assure us it shall be, but we know the power of God which can effect it, Matt. 22. 29. As Christ's resurrection was a glorious instance of the Divine power, and therefore he is declared to be the Son of God with power, by the resurrection from the dead, Rom. 1. 4, so will our resurrection be; and his resurrection is a standing evidence, as well as pattern of ours. And then all the enemies of the Redeemer's kingdom will be completely conquered. Not only he who had the power of death, that is, the devil, Heb. 2. 14, but the last enemy, that is, death. Death will be swallowed up in victory, 1 Cor. 15. 26, 54.

May we continually prepare for the coming of our Judge, looking to have our vile bodies changed by his Almighty power, and applying to him daily to new create our souls unto holiness, to deliver us from our enemies, and employ our bodies and souls as instruments of righteousness in his service on earth, till he shall come to receive us to his heavenly kingdom,

19. Let men look about whether there are

and weakly, and anathema, yet such that
 cannot be of our own strength, but would have
 the same operation, both of it, and would be
 enabled to do all things, for God's word asks
 not, "Can ye do it?" but "He himself, and for their
 sakes sake, for they do not work for the glory
 of God, but for themselves, that they may live
 in peace, rest, and quietness, in wealth and ear-
 nst pleasure, in honour and dignity, that they
 may get worldly goods, riches, lands and pos-
 sessions, and have all things at their own will
 and pleasure. See if there be any such amongst
 us, and pray God for them that at length, em-
 pherly they may be changed and turned to God
 and to seek earnestly God's glory, the salvation
 of others more than their own glory, worldly
 goods, carnal liberty, or pleasure — *I finding*

CHAPTER IV.

The apostle most affectionately exhorts
 the Philippians to stand fast in the Lord,
 ver 1. Gives directions to some particular
 persons among them and to them all in
 general, 2-9. Expresses his great satis-
 faction in the supply they had sent him,
 and his own contentment in every condition
 of life, 10-19. He adds a doxology to God
 the Father, salutes them, and sends the salu-
 ation of others, and closes all with his usual
 benediction, 21-23.

Ver 1-9 The apostle exhorts to
 steadfastness in the christian profession.
 Seeing our conversation is in heaven,
 and we look for the Saviour from thence,
 therefore let us stand fast. The believ-
 ing hope and prospect of eternal life
 should engage us to be steady, even,
 and constant, in our christian course.
 My brethren dearly beloved and longed
 for, my joy and crown, and again, My
 dearly beloved. Thus he expresses the
 pleasure he took in the Philippians, the
 kindness he had for them. There is
 difference of gifts, graces, and attain-
 ments, yet, being renewed by the same
 Spirit, after the same image, we are bre-
 thren. Brotherly love must always go
 along with the brotherly relation. He
 loved them, and longed to see them
 and hear from them, and earnestly de-
 sired their welfare. He had no greater
 joy than to hear of their spiritual health
 and prosperity. He loved them, and glo-
 ried in them, they were his crown as
 well as his joy. Never was a proud am-
 bitious man so pleased with the enaig-
 nances of the sincerity of their faith and
 obedience. So stand fast in the Lord.
 Being in Christ, they must stand fast in
 him, even and steady in their walk with
 him, and close and constant unto the
 end. To stand fast in the Lord, is to

stand fast in his strength, and by his
 grace, not trusting in ourselves, but
 disclaiming any sufficiency of our own,
 we must be strong in the Lord, and in
 the power of his might, Eph 6 10.

He exhorts them to be of one mind
 and to help each other, ver 2, 3. It
 seems Euodias and Syntyche were at
 variance, which hindered their useful-
 ness, and tended to divisions, the apostle
 therefore entreated them to be of one
 mind in Christ for his sake, seeking the
 peace and welfare of the church, who
 they were in uncertain. Then he exhorts
 to mutual assistance ver 3, and directs
 himself to a particular person, I entreat
 thee also thou fellow. Who this
 person was, is uncertain. Some suppose
 it to be one of the pastors of the church of
 the Philippians. The apostle says, Do
 thou help them. Those who help others
 should be helped themselves when there
 is occasion. Help them join with them
 strengthen their hands, encourage them
 in their difficulties. With Clement also
 and other my fellow labourers. As Paul
 had found the benefit of their assist-
 ance he concluded how comfortable it would
 be to his fellow labourers to have the
 assistance of others. Of his fellow
 labourers he says, Whose names are in
 the book of life. So we read of those
 who are written in the Lamb's book of
 life, Rev 21 27. Their are names in the
 book not characters and conditions only.
 We cannot say whose names are written
 there, but we may in charity conclude
 that all who labour in the gospel and
 are faithful to the interest of Christ and
 souls have their names in the book of
 life. Let us seek to give assurance that
 our names are written in that book.

He exhorts to holy joy and delight in
 God. Rejoice in the Lord always, and
 again I say, Rejoice, ver 4. Delight
 thyself in the Lord Ps 37 4, in the
 multitude of our thoughts within us
 grievous and afflictive thoughts his
 comforts delight our souls, Ps 94 19, and
 our meditation of him is sweet Ps 104
 34. There is enough in God to furnish us
 with matter of joy in the worst circum-
 stances on earth. Notwithstanding their
 former manifold sins and their recent
 lamented imperfections and defilements
 the deplorable evils they must witness
 among professed christians and the la-
 mentable state of the world around
 them, believers always have ground

for resting in the Lord, though they often find it hard to rejoice. Joy in God is of great consequence in the christian life; and christians need to be again and again called to it. It more than counterbalances all causes for sorrow.

Here is an exhortation to candour and gentleness, and good temper towards the brethren. Let your moderation be known to all men, ver 5. In things indifferent do not run into extremes, avoid bigotry and animosity, judge charitably concerning one another. The word signifies a good disposition towards other men. Let their enemies perceive how moderate they were as to obtaining and using outward things, and how composedly they suffered loss and hardships. The consideration of our Master's approach, and our final account, should support us under present sufferings and moderate our affections to outward good. The day of final retribution will soon arrive with complete redemption to believers, and perdition to ungodly men.

Here is a caution against disquieting, perplexing care, ver 6. Be careful for nothing, the name as Matt 6 25, have no anxious care and distracting thought as to the wants and difficulties of life. There is a care of diligence which is our duty, and consists in a wise forecast and due concern, but there is a care of diffidence and distrust which is our sin and folly, and which only perplexes and distracts the mind. Be careful for nothing, so as by your care to distrust God, and unfit yourselves for his service. As a sovereign antidote against perplexing care, constant prayer is recommended. Not only stated times for prayer, but to pray upon every particular emergency. In every thing by prayer. When any thing burdens our spirits, we must ease our minds by prayer when our affairs are perplexed or distressed, we must seek direction and support. We must join thanksgiving with prayers and supplications, not only seek supplies of good, but own mercies received. Let your requests be made known to God. Not that God needs to be told our wants or desires, he knows them better than we do, but he will have us express our value of the mercy, and sense of dependence on him. Thus applying to God, conscious of want, dependence, and unworthiness, in believing reliance on his mercy,

power, truth, and grace, the effect will be the peace of God keeping our hearts, ver 7. The peace of God, this comfortable sense of our reconciliation to God, and interest in his favour and his hope of the heavenly blessing, and enjoyment of God, hereafter, which surpasseth all understanding, is a precious good that can be sufficiently valued or duly expressed. It surpasses the comprehension of all who do not experience it, nor can any words give a just idea of it; even true believers cannot fully explain its nature and excellency, but they find their affections, and the powers of their souls strengthened and guarded by it. It is not entered into the heart of man, 1 Cor 2 9. This peace will keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus, it will keep us from sinking under troubles, and from sinking under them, keep us calm and sedate, without discomposure of passion and without satisfaction. Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee, Isa 26 3.

Believers are exhorted to get and to keep a good name, a name for good things with God and good men, whatsoever things are true and honest ver 8, regard to truth in our words and engagements, and to proper and becoming behaviour, suitable to our circumstances and condition of life. Whatsoever things are just and pure, agreeable to the rules of justice and righteousness in all our dealings with men; and without the impurity or mixture of sin. Whatsoever things are lovely and of good report, amiable, that will render us beloved, and make us well spoken of, and well thought of, by others. If there is any virtue, if there is any praise, any thing really virtuous of any kind, and worthy of commendation. Whatever tempers, words, or actions are to be commended and approved among men, let them continually think of these things, and practice them. If there be any virtue, think of these things, imitate what is truly excellent among others, and let not God witness you in any instance of goodness. We should not be ashamed to learn of good things of those who have not our advantages. We should walk in all the ways of virtue, and abide therein; then, whether our praise be of men or not, it will be of God.

In these things the apostle proposes himself for an example, ver. 9. Observe, Paul's doctrine and life quite agreed together. What they saw in him, was the same with what they heard from him. It gives great force to what we say to others, when we can appeal to what they see in us. The way to have the God of peace with us, is, to keep close to our duty to him. The Lord is with us while we are with him.

The origin of all our privileges and salvation, is wholly in the free mercy of God; yet the enjoyment of them is closely connected with our conscientious and holy conversation. Therefore, whatsoever is virtuous and commendable, whatsoever prophets, apostles, or martyrs have exemplified; whatsoever excellency we have heard, or read of, or witnessed, in the conduct of the saints; of these we should continually think, and diligently endeavour to practise them, hoping for the presence and the blessing of the God of peace and love. These things must rightly be ascribed only to Christ our Saviour, whose it is, to reconcile us to the Father of heaven, to justify us, to take away our sins, and to give us life everlasting. These are works of God, pertaining to God, and to him only are to be ascribed, and to no other, neither men, words, nor deeds.

8. Whatsoever things are truly virtuous, honourable, just, pure, amiable, of good report.

Ver. 10-19. In these verses we have the grateful acknowledgment which the apostle makes of the kindness of the Philippians, now that he was a prisoner at Rome. He acknowledges also their former kindness to him, ver. 15, 16. Paul had a grateful spirit; for though what his friends did for him was nothing in comparison of the obligations he had laid upon them, yet he speaks of their kindness as if it had been a generous charity, when it was really far short of what they owed. In works of charity we are ready to ask what other people do; but the church of the Philippians never considered that. And they were the only church who were thus just and generous, ver. 16. Observe, they sent only to his necessity; probably it was according to their ability, and he did not desire superfluities. It is well to see those to whom God has abounded in the gifts of his grace, making grate-

ful returns to his people and ministers, according to their own ability, and their necessity. Many make it an excuse for their charity, that they have given once; but the Philippians often relieved and refreshed him in his necessities.

The apostle excuses their neglect of late, and is willing to suppose, that they would have done it before, if a fair opportunity had offered. How contrary is this to the conduct of many! Paul excused that which he had reason to resent. He commends their present liberality, ver. 14. It is a good work to succour and help a good minister in trouble. The nature of true christian sympathy is not only to feel concerned for our friends in their troubles, but to do what we can to help them. He obviates the ill use some might make of his taking so much notice of what was sent him. It did not come from discontent, or distrust of providence, ver. 11, not in respect of any want he felt, or of any want he feared. As to the former, he was content with the little he had; as to the latter, he depended upon the providence of God to provide for him from day to day. I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. We have here an account of Paul's learning, not that which he got at the feet of Gamaliel, but that which he got at the feet of Christ. He had learned to be content. He was in bonds, imprisonments, and necessities, often; but in all he learned to be content, to bring his mind to his condition, and make the best of it. These lessons he learned by a deep sense of his own unworthiness, and his obligations to the Lord—by continually contemplating the poverty, abasement, and sufferings of Christ; by a believing confidence in the wisdom, faithfulness, and love of God, who orders all for the best; and by a lively hope of everlasting happiness, desiring to promote the cause of Christ by any labours or sufferings. Pride, unbelief, vain hankering after something unpossessed, and fickle disrelish of present things, render men discontented even under favourable circumstances. Let us study this important lesson, praying continually for patient submission and hope when we are abased; for humility and a heavenly mind when exalted.

I know both how to be abased, and how to abound, ver. 12. This is a special

grace, to carry an equal temper of mind through all varieties of our state. To accommodate ourselves to an afflicted condition: to know how to be abased, how to be hungry, how to suffer want, so as not to be overcome by the temptations of it. Not to lose our comfort in God, nor distrust his providence, nor to take any indirect course for our own supply. To a prosperous condition; to know how to abound, how to be full, so as not to be proud, or secure, or luxurious. And this is a harder lesson than the other; for the temptations of fullness and prosperity are even more than those of affliction and want. But how must we learn it? I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me, ver. 13. We need strength from Christ, that we may be contented in every condition. The apostle had seemed to boast of himself, and of his own strength, ver. 12, but he transfers all the praise to Christ. Through Christ, who is strengthening me, and does continually strengthen me; it is by his constant and renewed strength I am enabled to act in every thing: I wholly depend upon him for all my spiritual power.

He did not speak from covetousness, or an affection to worldly wealth; not because I desire a gift, ver. 17. He desired it not so much for his own sake, as for their's. It is not with any design to draw more from you, but to encourage to such exercises of beneficence as will meet a glorious reward hereafter. They sent him a small token, and he desired no more: he was not solicitous for a present superfluity, or a future supply; I am full, having received from Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you. A good man will soon have enough of this world; not only of living in it, but of receiving from it. A covetous worldling, if he has ever so much, desires still to have more; but a heavenly christian, though he has little, has enough. The apostle assures them, that God did accept, and would recompense their kindness to him. It is an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God. Not a sacrifice of atonement, for none can make atonement for sin but Christ; but a sacrifice of acknowledgment, and well-pleasing to God. It was the genuine fruit of their faith in the Lord Jesus; and their love to him would make them

amends for the kindness they had showed him. He shall do it, not only as your God, but as my God, who takes what is done unto me as done to himself. You supplied my needs, according to your poverty; and he shall supply your's, according to his riches. But still it is by Christ Jesus: through him we have grace to do that which is good, and through him we must expect the reward. Not of debt, but of grace; for the more we do for God, the more we are indebted to him, because we receive the more from him.

Knowing then the exceeding riches of grace which we have in Christ Jesus our Lord, let us glorify him, eminently, abundantly; and as we have all things by him, let us do all things for him and to his glory.—(73.)

12 "Instructed," or rather "initiated," probably alluding to the ancient mysteries.

14. From the manner in which Paul here expresses himself, it appears he was in great want of necessaries before the assistance sent by the Philippians arrived. As the Romans were not convicted under him, he did not consider himself entitled to receive supplies from them. Being a prisoner, he could not work as elsewhere, and it was his sole never to receive any thing from the churches where factions had been raised against him.

Ver. 20—23. The apostle concludes,

1. With praises to God; Now unto God and our Father be glory for ever and ever, Amen, ver. 20. It is a great condescension and favour in God, to allow us to say to him, Our Father. It is also a great encouragement to consider him as one so nearly related, and who bears so tender an affection towards us. We should look upon God, under all our weakness and fears, not as an enemy, but as a Father, who is disposed to pity us and help us. We must ascribe glory to God as a Father: the glory of his own excellence, and of all his mercy unto us. We must thankfully own the receipt of all from him, and give the praise of all to him. And our praise must be constant and perpetual; it must be glory for ever and ever.

2. With salutations to his friends at Philippi; Salute every saint in Christ Jesus, ver. 21. He desires remembrances to every particular saint among them.

3. He sends salutations from those who were at Rome. Chiefly they who are of Cesar's household; the christian converts who belonged to the emperor's

court. There were saints in Cesar's household. The gospel early spread even among some of the rich and great.

4. The apostolical benediction, as usual; The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen. The free favour and good-will of Christ be your portion and happiness.

God's grace and favour, which reconciled souls enjoy, with the whole of the

graces in us, which flow from it, are all purchased unto us by Christ's merit, and applied by his intercession; and therefore is justly called the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ — (79f)

22. It is supposed that even Poppea, the empress of Nero, was favourably inclined to christianity. *Josephus* mentions her as a worshipper of the true God. *Jerome* states that St. Paul was the instrument to convert many of the emperor's family and household to Christ.

THE EPISTLE TO THE COLOSSIANS.

Colossæ was a city in Phrygia. Christianity was introduced there previous to the imprisonment of St. Paul, as appears from this epistle, though from ch. 2. 1, it does not seem to have been personally visited by the apostle. This epistle was occasioned by some difficulties which arose among the Colossians, probably from false teachers, in consequence of which they sent to the apostle in imprisonment at Rome. These teachers appear to have inculcated not only many ritual observances of the mosaic law, but also the doctrines of the rabbins and gentiles, who held platonic notions respecting the ministry of demons or angels.

The scope of the epistle is to show that all hope of man's redemption is founded on Christ, in whom alone are all complete fulness, perfections, and sufficiency. The Colossians are cautioned against the insinuations of judaizing teachers, and also against philosophical speculations and human inventions and traditions, as inconsistent with full reliance on Christ. In the first two chapters the apostle tells them what they must believe, and in the two last what they must do—the doctrine of faith, and the precepts of life for salvation.

I. After a short introduction, ch. 1. 1, 2, the apostle expresses his joy for the favourable character he heard of them, ver. 3-14, and then speaks of the exceeding dignity of the Lord Jesus Christ, showing his infinite superiority to the angels ver. 15-20. He again expresses his joy in the faithfulness of the Colossians, and refers to his sufferings in the cause of the gospel, and his anxiety that they might be established in the faith, ver. 21-29 ch. 2. 1-7.

II. He cautions against the deceitful and false teachers, and warns against the worshipping of angels, and the mosaic ritual observances, ver. 8-23. Then follow precepts concerning the duties of life, especially those of a relative character, ch. 3. and 4. 1-6. The epistle then concludes with some exhortations and directions, ver. 7-18.

The epistle to the Colossians, as well as those to the Ephesians and Philippians, which were written about the same time, and during the imprisonment of St. Paul, are particularly remarkable for the pathos and christian earnestness, which indicate that extraordinary consolations were enjoyed by the apostle during his sufferings for the sake of Christ.

CHAPTER I.

The apostle Paul salutes the Colossians, ver. 1, 2. Blesses God for their faith, love, and hope, which Epaphras had reported, 3-8. Prays for their fruitfulness in spiritual knowledge, 9-14. Gives a glorious view of Christ, and of his grace to them, to engage their adherence to him, 15-23. And sets out his own character, as the apostle of the gentiles, 24-29.

Ver. 1-8. St. Paul calls himself an apostle of Jesus Christ, by the will of God. An apostle's work was peculiarly to plant the christian church, and confirm

the christian doctrine. He attributes this, not to his own merit, strength, or sufficiency; but to the free grace and good will of God. He calls the christians at Colosse saints and faithful brethren in Christ. All true christians are brethren one to another. Toward God they must be saints, sanctified by his grace; bearing his image, and aiming at his glory. Faithfulness runs through every character and relation of the christian life, and is the crown and glory of them all. He wishes them grace and peace, the free favour of God, and all the blessed fruits of it.

Thanksgiving ought to be a part of every prayer. He thanks God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and it is encouragement that we can look to him as Christ's Father and our Father, as his God and our God. He gives thanks to God for the graces of God in the Colossians, which were evidences of the grace of God toward them, Faith, hope, and love, are the three principal graces in the christian life, and proper matter for our prayer and thanksgiving. 1. He gives thanks for their faith in Christ Jesus; that they were brought to believe in him, profess his religion, and venture their souls upon his undertaking. 2. For their love. Besides the general love which is due to all men, there is a particular love owing to the saints, those who are of the christian brotherhood. 1 Pet. 2. 17, notwithstanding lesser points of difference, and many weaknesses. 3. For their hope; the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, ver. 5. The happiness of heaven is called then hope, because it is the thing hoped for; looking for the blessed hope, Tit. 2. 13. Then faith in Christ, and love to the saints, had reference to the hope laid up for them in heaven. The more we fix our hopes on the recompense of reward in the other world, the more free and liberal shall we be of our earthly treasure on all occasions of doing good. It was treasured up *for them*, no enemy could deprive them of it.

He blesses God for the means of grace which they enjoyed; Whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel, ver. 5. The gospel is the word of truth, and we may safely venture our immortal souls upon it. It proceeds from the God of truth, and the Spirit of truth, and is a faithful saying. They heard of the hope laid up in heaven in the word of the truth of the gospel. And all who hear the word of the gospel, ought to bring forth the fruit of the gospel, obey it, and have their principles and lives formed according to it. Wherever the gospel comes, it will bring forth fruit to the honour and glory of God. Does the gospel bring forth fruit in us? So it does in others. He mentions the minister by whom they believed, Epaphras, with great respect, ver. 7, 8. Not only they served the same Master, but they were engaged in the same work, and it is an

endearing consideration, that they are engaged in the same service. He represents him as a faithful minister of Christ to them.

The faithfulness of a minister appears in that he not only advances his Master's glory, but promotes with all his power, the benefit and safety of the people committed to him. This they do by watching over their flocks; by distributing to them the food of their souls seasonably; by dispensing milk to babes, and strong meat to the more advanced; and, to sum up all in a word, by never omitting, through indolence, to do or speak whatever may be necessary for the salvation of the people; nor to teach or do any thing which may hinder their salvation.--(78.)

He does not say, who is your minister; but, who is the minister of Christ for you. It is by his authority and appointment, though for the people's service. Who also declared unto us your love in the Spirit. He recommends Epaphras to their affection, from the good report of their sincere love to Christ, and all his members, which was wrought in them by the Spirit, and is agreeable to the spirit of the gospel.

The Holy Spirit is the author of christian love, and it flows from a spiritual heart, a heart regenerated and renewed. Hence observe the excellency of christian love. Worldly love arises, either from views of interest or from conformity of manners; carnal love, from the appetite for pleasure. To these, something corrupt, sordid, and vicious, always adheres. But christian love arises from the Holy Spirit, and is altogether full of holiness and purity. Again, the love of the Colossians is said to be in the spirit, for they had not seen Paul, but only heard of him through others. Having loved him whom they never saw in the flesh, they are said to love in the spirit. 1 Cor. 5. 3. Hence observe, it is the duty of every believer to have spiritual love for other good men, though known only by report. It is sufficient if one be known in respect to his good qualities, though unknown in person.--(79.)

4 Properly "saints" is a term given to men effectually called. The children of God truly converted are called saints, not because they are perfectly holy, without all sin, but in four respects, 1. In respect of separation, because they are elected and gathered out of the world,

and joined unto God's people, and dedicated to holy services and uses. 2. In respect of vocation, therefore the apostle, 1 Cor. i. 2, when he had said they were sanctified, he said by way of explanation they were saints by calling. 3. In respect of regeneration, because they are now new creatures. 4. And lastly, in respect of justification or imputation, because the holiness and sanctity of Christ is imputed to them. The sense being thus given, the doctrine is plain, that men may be saints in this life; there are saints on earth as well as in heaven. This confutes the papists, who acknowledge no saints till canonized by the pope, till they are dead, and it must be a hundred years after their death. And it is of singular comfort to the poor despised saints, that God accounts of them above all the people on the earth. — *Byfield*.

Ver. 9—14. The apostle was constant in prayer:

1. That the believers might be filled with the knowledge of God's will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding. Especially that they might fully know the will of God, both in his method of saving sinners, and in respect of their duties to him and each other, as his redeemed servants; that they might know the spiritual meaning of his commandments, and how to obey them in their different offices and situations, and so do the work of Christ, assigned to them, in the best manner and from the purest motives.

2. That their conversation might be good. Our understanding is a spiritual understanding, when we exemplify it in our way of living—That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, ver. 10. Good words will not do without good works. We must abound in every good work: not in some only, which are most easy. There must be a regular, uniform regard to all the will of God. And the more fruitful we are in good works, the more we shall increase in the knowledge of God, John 7. 17.

3. That they might be strengthened; strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, ver. 11. He who undertakes to give strength to his people, is a God of power, and of glorious power. To be strengthened, is to be furnished by the grace of God for every good work, and fortified by that grace against every evil one: it is to be enabled to do our duty, and to hold fast our integrity. The blessed Spirit is the author of this strength: for we are strengthened with might by the Spirit in the inward man, Eph. 3. 16. The word of God is the means by which

he conveys it; and it must be brought in by prayer. It was in answer to earnest prayer that the apostle obtained sufficient grace. In praying for spiritual strength we are not straitened in the promises, and should not be straitened in our hopes and desires.

Let us pray that we may be strengthened, with all that might for which we have occasion, that grace which is sufficient for all the trials of life, and able to help us in time of need. It is only according to his glorious power. The grace of God in the hearts of believers is the power of God; and there is glory in this power. And the communications of strength are not according to our weakness, but according to his power, from whom it is received. The special use of this strength was for suffering. There is work to be done even when we are suffering. When we bear our troubles well, though very many, and the circumstances of them very aggravating, then we bear them with all patience. This is even unto long-suffering, patience drawn out to great length: to bear trouble as long as God continues it. It is with joyfulness; to rejoice in tribulation; to take joyfully the spoiling of our goods, and rejoice that we are counted worthy to suffer for his name; to have joy as well as patience in the troubles of life. This we never could do by any strength of our own, but as we are strengthened by the grace of God. Amidst all their trials they gave thanks to the Father of our Lord Jesus, whose special grace fitted them to partake of the inheritance provided for the saints, in the world of perfect light, knowledge, holiness, and happiness; at a distance from all ignorance, sin, temptation, fear, and sorrow. They had obtained a lot in that blessed inheritance, and their delight in the work and worship of God, especially their love to the Lord Jesus Christ and his glorious salvation, were evidence that God intended to bring them to it.

To effect this change, those were made willing subjects of Christ who were slaves of Satan. The conversion of a sinner is the translation of a soul into the kingdom of Christ, out of the kingdom of the devil. The power of sin is shaken off, and the power of Christ submitted to. The law of the Spirit of

life in Christ Jesus, makes them free from the law of sin and death; and it is the kingdom of his dear Son, or the Son of his peculiar love, his beloved Son, Matt. 3. 17, eminently the Beloved, Eph. 1. 6. It is the effect of the Divine power to change the heart, and make it heavenly. All who are designed for heaven hereafter, are prepared for heaven now. Those who have the inheritance of sons, have the education of sons and the disposition of sons; they have the spirit of adoption, whereby they cry, Abba, Father, Rom. 8. 15.

By faith in Christ, they enjoyed this redemption, as the purchase of his atoning blood, whereby forgiveness of sins, and all other spiritual blessings were vouchsafed to them. In this the Jewish and gentile converts are joined together; all men are slaves of Satan, of whatever nominal religion they are, till inward conversion translates them into the kingdom of Christ. Let us reflect that all are under this power of darkness, excepting those rescued from this destructive bondage; and that these could not have been saved had they not been rescued from merited wrath, by the blood of Christ, through whom their sins are pardoned; and that all must soon be unalterably fixed in one or other of these states. Surely then we shall deem it such a favour to be delivered from Satan's kingdom and brought into that of Christ, that we shall feel most grateful, even under temptations and afflictions, knowing that these trials will soon end, and that every believer will be found among those who are come out of great tribulation, and will sing his praises who has washed them from their sins in his own blood.

Thus the love of Christ knew not how to spare any thing which could promote the Father's glory, and man's salvation. Shall we then spare ourselves, and fear lest we should give too much in return?—(95.)

14. Is it asked whether the fathers under the Old Testament enjoyed this redemption, Christ not being then born, not to say offered, for the expiation of the sins of men; we answer, the faithful under the Old Testament enjoyed redemption in Christ, through his blood, which was to be shed, like as we have, through his blood having been shed; because this sacrifice of Christ had a saving efficacy, not only by the actual offering, but by the eternal decree of God, and the eternal efficacy of the same sacrifice, as well before, as after, it was offered.—*Davenant*.

Ver. 15—23. Having mentioned Christ as the well-beloved Son of God, the apostle here explains more fully the import of that expression. He declares him to be the image of the invisible God. Being possessed of all the Divine perfections as one with the Father, he appeared on earth, displaying those perfections, and made known the invisible God to mankind as his express image. He represented the Father so that they who saw Him saw the Father also. The person of Christ, as God in human nature, is the visible discovery of the invisible God, and he that hath seen Him hath seen the Father. Let us adore these mysteries in humble faith, and contemplate the glory of the Lord in Christ Jesus, the express image of the Divine excellency. Christ is the First-born of every creature. Not that he is himself a creature: he was born or begotten before all the creation, or any creature, was made; which is the scripture way of representing eternity, and by which the eternity of God is represented to us. It signifies his dominion over all things; as the first-born in a family is heir and lord of all, so he is the Heir of all things, Heb. 1. 2.

Christ is also often called the First begotten, or Only begotten of the Father; and these expressions are to be understood of the mysterious union in the sacred Trinity; for the great display of the love of God to the world, consisted in giving his own Son to become man in order to die for our sins, rather than in giving him, when incarnate, to death for us.

Christ is so far from being himself a creature, that he is the Creator; For by him were all things created, which are in heaven and earth, visible and invisible, ver. 16. He made all things of nothing; the highest angel in heaven, as well as men upon earth. He made the upper and lower world, with all the inhabitants of both, John 1. 3. Christ is the eternal Wisdom of the Father, and the world was made in wisdom. All things are created by him and for him. Being created by him, they were created for him; being made by his power, they were made according to his pleasure, and for his praise. He is the end, as well as the cause of all things.

He is before all things, ver. 1st. He had a being before the world was made;

before the beginning of time, therefore from all eternity. Wisdom was with the Father, and possessed by him before his works of old, Prov. 8. 22. In the beginning the Word was with God, and was God, John 1. 1. He not only had a being before he was born as a man, but he had a being before all time. By him all things consist. He not only created them all at first, but it is by the word of his power, that they are still upheld, Heb. 1. 3, and preserved from running into confusion.

The apostle next shows what Christ is as Mediator, ver. 18, 19. He is the Head of the body, the church: not only a head of government and direction, but a head of vital influence, as the head in the natural body; for all grace and strength are derived from him; and the church is his body, Eph. 1. 22, 23. He is the beginning, the principle of our resurrection, as well as the first-born himself. All our hopes and joys take rise from Him who is the Author of our salvation. The first and only one who rose by his own power, and was declared to be the Son of God, and Lord of all things. He rose as the first-fruits, 1 Cor. 15. 20. He has in all things the pre-eminence. It was the will of the Father that he should have all power in heaven and earth. He has the pre-eminence in the hearts of his people above the world and the flesh; and by giving him the pre-eminence we comply with the Father's will, That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father, John 5. 23.

All fulness dwells in him, ver. 19, a fulness of merit and righteousness, of strength and grace for us. That all the fulness of God should dwell in the person of Christ; and be exercised by, and communicated through his human nature, by virtue of the union of the Godhead and human nature in his mysterious person; that from his fulness all might receive who became one with him by faith. Here we may become acquainted with the character of our God, and may approach him notwithstanding our guilt.

The apostle in ver. 20—23 returns to the subject of redemption, and describes the mode of it. God showed his justice in exacting a full satisfaction; the death of an infinite person for infinite guilt. He showed his mercy, in exacting it,

not from us miserable creatures who were incapable of paying it, but from Christ, who could pay it. This mode of redeeming mankind by the death of Christ was most suitable. Man hereby most clearly discovers the infinite love of God to him, and is constrained both to avoid and to abhor sin, and a perfect example is set before us. Here is presented to our view the method of reconciliation. And that, notwithstanding the fall of man, and the hatred of sin on God's part, it pleased God to reconcile fallen man to himself. From this certain persuasion of reconciliation, arises our great consolation, in that spiritual struggle which the conscience experiences under the horror of sin. For if we had to treat with a God hostile to us, who, under the load of so many sins, could raise his eyes towards heaven, who could think on the Divine Majesty without trembling? But having to do with a God propitiated and reconciled, we approach the throne of mercy with great confidence. For he will call to mind his fatherly pity and compassion: and that because the reconciliation is accomplished, — (78.)

Thus by the blood shed upon the cross, is effected the reconciliation, both in respect of things in heaven, and things on earth. The justified spirits in heaven owed their reconciliation to Christ's undertaking; and all on earth, whether Jews or Gentiles, were thus reconciled to God, and at length would be translated to heaven, there to continue for ever in a state of perfect reconciliation to God and each other.

The Colossians had been alienated from God and his service, yea, enemies to him in their minds, which had been manifested by their wicked works, ver. 21, so that they justly merited to be treated as enemies by the Lord, yet by his mercy in Christ Jesus they were now brought into a state of reconciliation. This had been effected, in the body of his flesh, in the body which he assumed of our nature, that he might be capable of sufferings and death, as a sacrifice to Divine Justice for the sins of men. If convinced that we once were alienated, and enemies in our minds by wicked works, and are now reconciled to God by the sacrifice and death of Christ in our nature, we shall not attempt to explain away, nor yet

think fully to comprehend these mysteries; but shall see the glory of this plan of redemption, and rejoice in the hope set before us.

The gospel had been preached to them, and they were enabled to believe it; thus they were freely justified, and brought to love and serve God; and at length should be presented before him, so perfectly holy as to be unblameable and unproveable in his sight. This would be the case with all of them who continued in the profession and exercise of faith, like a building settled upon a firm foundation, and thus were not moved away from the hope of eternal life, according to the gospel. This had been preached without distinction of nation or person; to set forth this St. Paul was made an apostle.

If this be so, that God's love is so great to us, what shall we do now for God? Surely our hearts must speak. Has Christ done this for me? then I will walk answerably to his love. It must needs be a vile thing to be a traitor again to that God who has been so merciful. Be not content, then, sometimes to stumble upon a good duty, when the fit takes, but think all too little for Him who thought not his heart blood too much for you. Be frequent in prayer, and abound in holy duties; live no more to yourselves but to Christ. Christ died for us. But wherefore? That we should live in sin still? No, but that we should die to sin, and live henceforth, not to ourselves but to him.—(76)

15. First-born—of "chief of all the creation." In the early ages the first-born son possessed extraordinary privileges and honours. Hence the hebrew term, and its correspondent word in other languages, acquired the secondary meaning of that which is chief and most excellent. Of this there are many examples in the scriptures, and in jewish phraseology, the Holy and blessed God is called the First-born of the world, to signify his supremacy over all created beings. The just inference from what follows there is, that Christ is superior to all creatures, and that consequently, in his proper and original nature, he cannot be a creature.—*J. P. Smith.*

16. *Havenant* considers, that the exposition of those who apply the terms used in this passage exclusively to heavenly and invisible beings, is most correct.

20. God's reconciling us to himself by the cross of Christ, is a reconciliation that results from God's graciously providing and accepting an atonement for us, that he might not inflict the punishment upon us which we deserved, and the law condemned us to, but might be at

peace with us, and receive us favour, on Christ's account.—*Guyse.*

22. The body of his flesh, or, real human nature. This implies that he had another nature or mode of existence, which was not subject to death.

23. We hence infer that it is sufficient for salvation if we yield belief to that gospel which was openly preached to all, although we may be ignorant of, and reject those doctrines which the papists insist upon the faithful under the title of traditions.—*Havenant.*

Ver. 24—29. The apostle suffered in the cause of Christ. He suffered for preaching the gospel. And while he suffered in so good a cause, he could esteem it an honour to him. Not that the afflictions of the apostle, or any other, were expiations for sin, as the sufferings of Christ were. And there was nothing wanting in them; nothing which needed to be filled up; they were perfectly sufficient to satisfy God's justice, in order to the salvation of his people. But the sufferings of Paul and other believers made them conformable to Christ; and they followed him in his suffering state. The atonement must be applied; that application is by faith; faith came by hearing, hearing by preaching, and preaching could not be separated from suffering.

Thus strongly does the apostle state the great advantages to be derived from his own sufferings, to his fellow-christians. But how does he shrink back from putting those advantages in the same relation to the salvation of mankind, which belonged to the sufferings of his Lord! He says, 1 Cor. 1. 13. Was Paul crucified for you?—(95)

Both the sufferings of the Head and of the members are called the sufferings of Christ, and make up, as it were, one body of sufferings, with this distinction, that he suffered for the redemption of the church; we suffer on other accounts, for we do but slightly taste of that cup of afflictions of which Christ first drank deeply. A christian may therefore be said to fill up that which remains of the sufferings of Christ, when he takes up his cross, and bears patiently the afflictions God has allotted to be borne by him, after the pattern of Christ.—(78)

May we all remember that our afflictions are for the glory of God, our own salvation, and the benefit of the body of Christ. The apostle was made a minister of the gospel, according to the sovereign appointment of God, that he

might bring the gentiles into the church. Thus he was employed to fulfil the prophecies, by making known that mystery which had been hid from men, during the preceding ages, but was at length revealed to the followers of Christ, ver. 27. This mystery now, in the fulness of time, is made manifest to the saints, clearly revealed and made apparent. The meanest saint under the gospel, understands more than the greatest prophets under the law. He who is least in the kingdom of heaven, is greater than they.

To the Colossians it had pleased God to make known the abundance of his mercy and grace, as well as the glory of his perfections, in this mystery among the gentiles, not only Christ, the promised Messiah, preached and reigning among them, but Christ in the hearts of multitudes, dwelling and ruling there by faith, and the power of his Spirit, implanting his love, renewing his image, and writing his law. Let us be thankful that God has made known to us those mysteries which were hid from ages and generations, and has showed the riches of his glory among us. But these things can only be known by his saints. The secret of the Lord is still with them that fear him, and we need not wonder to hear those who possess the wisdom of this world, show their ignorance of these mysteries, when we reflect on the enmity of the carnal mind to the doctrines of the cross.

The Saviour was the great subject of the apostle's preaching, and will be so of every faithful minister. They warn every man to flee from the wrath to come, and from every other confidence, to this refuge; and instruct every man in all things that can render them wise to salvation, or wise to serve God in their respective places. For they desire to present every one who hears them, complete in Christ, perfectly justified, and in the end perfectly sanctified.

In this work the apostle laboured with unwearied diligence; striving to bring sinners to Christ, and to establish believers in holiness. This was according to the working of the Divine power on his soul, which wrought mightily in him, exciting fervent desires to God, and for the salvation of souls, supporting him in patience and fortitude amidst difficulties and persecutions.

As Christ is preached among us, let us seriously inquire whether he dwells and reigns in us; for this alone can warrant our assured hope of his glory. May we be careful to strive according to that working which worketh mightily in those who simply depend on it, pray for it, and go forth in that strength to do the work, and seek the glory of the Lord. We must be faithful to death, through all trials, that we may receive the crown of life, and receive the end of our faith, the salvation of our souls.

24. Paul's meaning is, that he bore his many afflictions for the church, not to expiate sins, but for its edification and confirmation in the doctrine of the gospel—that he might thereby continually instruct the church, not that he might make satisfaction for the sins of its faithful members: to make satisfaction for another, and to liberate him from the punishment Divine Justice requires, is a work of mediation, not of simple love. The offices of a Mediator cannot be performed by any one member to another, but proceed from the Head alone to all the other parts. —*Davenant.*

CHAPTER II.

The apostle expresses his love to, and joy in believers, whom he had never seen, and encourages their continuing to walk in Christ, ver. 1-7. Cautions against the errors of heathen philosophy, against the vanity of Jewish traditions, and against an observance of Mosaic rites, which had been completely fulfilled in Christ, beyond what they could hope to find elsewhere, 8-17. Against worshipping angels, as that was in effect renouncing their Head, Christ, 18, 19. And against legal ordinances and human institutions, which are of no advantage for spiritual purposes, 20-23.

Ver. 1-7. Paul had concern for the Colossians, and other churches, of which he seems not to have had personal knowledge. His care amounted to a conflict. Herein he was a follower of his Master, who was in an agony, and was heard in that he feared. We may keep up communion by faith, hope, and holy love, even with churches and fellow-Christians, of whom we have no personal knowledge. We can think and pray, and be concerned for one another, at the greatest distance; and we may hope to meet in heaven those we never saw in the flesh. The apostle desired for them, That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, ver. 2. He was solicitous about their spiritual welfare. Here is a description of soul prosperity.

1. The soul prospers, when we have a distinct knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus. To understand the mystery, now made known concerning the Father and Christ; not barely to speak of it, but to enter into its meaning and design. This we should labour after, and then the soul prospers.

2. When we not only believe with the heart, but are ready, when called to it, to make confession with our mouth. This is called the riches of the full assurance of understanding. Knowledge and faith make a soul rich. This is being rich toward God, rich in faith, and true riches, Luke 12. 21; Jam. 2. 5.

3. It consists in the abundance of comfort in our souls; That their hearts might be comforted. The soul prospers, when filled with joy and peace, Rom. 15. 13, and has satisfaction within, which all the troubles without cannot disturb; and is able to joy in the Lord, when all other comforts fail, Hab. 3. 17, 18.

4. The more intimate communion we have with our fellow-Christians, the more the soul prospers. Holy love knits the hearts of Christians together; faith and love both contribute to our comfort. The stronger our faith, and the warmer our love, the more will our comfort be. Observe, The treasures of wisdom are hid, not *from* us, but *for* us, in Christ. In the mystery of godliness were treasured up all the riches of wisdom and knowledge. These were hid from proud unbelievers, but displayed in the person and redemption of Christ. Man's true wisdom consists in a practical and experimental understanding of these mysteries; all contrary to this is worthless. Though our understandings cannot comprehend the mystery of God, we may believe, acknowledge, and adore it.

The apostle insists so much upon the perfection of Christ and the gospel revelation, to counteract the ensnaring insinuations of evil teachers. Satan spoils souls by beguiling them, 2 Cor. 11. 3. He could not run if he did not deceive; and he could not deceive but by our own fault and folly. See the danger of enticing words; how many are ruined by the false disguises and fair appearances of evil principles and wicked practices. Be aware and afraid of those who would entice you to any evil; for they aim to spoil you, Prov. 1. 10. This the apostle strongly urged, lest any should beguile

them into some specious delusion, as if either heathen sages or Jewish scribes could teach any wisdom preferable to the mysteries of the gospel.

His concern for them is repeated, ver.

5. The order and steadfastness of Christians are matter of joy to ministers; the more steadfast our faith in Christ is, the better order there will be in our whole conversation; for we live and walk by faith, 2 Cor. 5. 7; Heb. 10. 38.

All Christians have, in profession at least, received Jesus Christ the Lord; received him as Christ, the great Prophet of the church, anointed by God the Father to reveal his will; as Jesus the great High Priest, and Saviour from sin and wrath, by the expiatory sacrifice of himself; and as Lord, or Sovereign and King. Received him, consented to him, taken him for theirs. The great concern of those who have received Christ, is, to walk in him: to make their practice conformable with their principles. The more closely we walk with Christ, the more we are rooted and established in the faith.

The gripe or hold which faith lays upon Christ, is like that which the tree has in the ground, and so is most sure. For though the top of the tree shake, yet the root remains firm, and its firmness is from the solidity of the ground, through which the roots are spread. Its fruitfulness also is by the sap conveyed from the ground by the roots, so the stability of believers flows from Christ, sap and influence is conveyed from him by faith, to make them useful.—(79.)

If we walk in him, we shall be rooted in him, and the more firmly we are rooted in him, the more closely we shall walk in him; rooted as trees in a fertile soil, and built up as houses on a firm foundation. We cannot be built up in Christ, or grow in him, unless we are first rooted in him, or founded upon him. When united to him by lively faith, and hearty consent to his covenant, then we shall grow up in him in all things: as ye have been taught; according to the rule of the Christian doctrine, in which ye have been instructed. Being established in the faith, we must abound therein, and improve in it more and more; and this with thanksgiving. Again, the way to have the benefit and the comfort of God's grace, is, to join thanksgiving to all our

improvements, and to be sensible of the mercy of our privileges and attainments.

Hence we learn, 1. That true faith cannot exist with ingratitude. He who, through faith, sees himself delivered from hell, and designed for the glory of heaven, cannot but be grateful to the Author of his happiness. 2. Those who make no account of the gospel, are not as yet partakers of the benefits of Christ. If they were, surely they would break forth into thanksgiving for this saving light, so mercifully communicated by God. 3. God justly withdraws this benefit from those who do not receive it with thanksgiving, for gratitude is justly required, by God in acknowledgment for his mercies.—(78.)

2. "Of God and the Father, and of Christ" The mystery referred to is, God revealed not merely in the unity of his character, but in the plurality of Persons, the Son as well as the Father—God in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself.—*Schulzfeld.*

3. There is in the human nature of Christ, all that fulness of infused and created knowledge which is required for the ministration of our salvation; in his Divine nature, absolute omniscience is found. The attributes of the natures are not transferred from the one to the other, by virtue of the hypostatic union, but the attribute of one nature is ascribed to the other for the sake of the identity—because the man who suffered was God, and God, who is omnipotent, was also man in unity of person.—*Davenant.*

6. "Or, Since then ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him."—*Macknight.*

Ver. 8—12. Warning is given lest any man spoil them through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. There is a philosophy which nobly exercises our reasonable faculties, and is highly serviceable to religion; such a study of the works of God as leads us to the knowledge of God, and confirms our faith in him. But there is a philosophy which is vain and deceitful; which sets up the wisdom of man against the wisdom of God; and while it pleases men's fancies, hinders their faith; as nice and curious speculations about things above us, or of no use and concern to us; or care of words and terms of art, which have only an empty, and often a cheating appearance of knowledge. After tradition, after the rudiments of the world. The jews governed themselves by the traditions of their elders, and the rudi-

ments or rites which were only introductory to the gospel state; the gentiles mixed maxims of philosophy with christian principles; both alienated their minds from Christ. Those who walk in the way of the world, are turned from following after Christ.

The deceivers were especially the jewish teachers, who endeavoured to keep up the law of Moses in conjunction with the gospel of Christ, but really in contradiction to it. Here the apostle shows that we have in Christ the substance of all the shadows of the ceremonial law. Had they of old the Shechinah, or special presence of God, called the glory, from the visible token of it? So have we now in Jesus Christ, ver. 9. For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. Under the law, the presence of God dwelt between the cherubim, in a cloud which covered the mercy-seat; now it dwells in the person of our Redeemer, who partakes of our nature; and has more clearly declared the Father to us. It dwells in him bodily; not as the body is opposed to the spirit, but as the body is opposed to the shadow. The fulness of the Godhead dwells in Christ really, and not figuratively; for he is both God and man.

The jews thought themselves complete in the ceremonial law; but christian believers are complete in Christ, ver. 10. That was imperfect and defective; if the first covenant had been faultless, there should no place have been sought for the second. Heb. 8. 7; and the law was but a shadow of good things, and could never, by those sacrifices, make the comers thereunto perfect, Heb. 10. 1. But all the defects of it are made up in the gospel of Christ, by the complete sacrifice for sin, and revelation of the will of God.

To be complete is to be furnished with all things necessary for salvation. In Christ we have perfect wisdom; because by the right knowledge of him according to the doctrine of the gospel, what is sufficient to salvation is known. In Christ we have complete righteousness, because he has fully satisfied for our sins. In Christ we have sanctification, or indwelling righteousness. By this one word "complete," is shown that we have in Christ whatever is required for these. "In him," not when we look to Christ, as though he were distant

from us, but when we have Christ dwelling and abiding in us. And Christ is in us, and we are in him, when, by the power of the Spirit, and of faith wrought in our hearts by the Spirit, we are united to this our Head, and are grafted in him as branches in the vine. The wicked and unbelieving are excluded from the benefits of Christ, because they are separated from Christ himself, inasmuch as they are void of the Spirit and of faith, without which no one is in Christ, and Christ abideth in no one.—(78.)

As the Old Testament priesthood had its perfection in Christ; so likewise had the kingdom of David, which the Jews dwelt so much upon. And he is the Lord and Head of all powers in heaven and earth, of angels and men. Angels, and authorities, and powers are subject unto him, 1 Pet. 3. 22; so that Christians have nothing to fear from any creature, nor reason to seek help from any but Christ. Had they circumcision, which has been called the seal of the covenant? In Christ we are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, ver. 11, by the work of regeneration in us, which is the spiritual or Christian circumcision, Rom. 2. 29. This belongs to the Christian dispensation. It is made without hands; not by the power of any creature, but by the power of the Holy Spirit. Believers are born of the Spirit, John 3. 5. And it is the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Spirit, Tit. 3. 5. It consists in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh; in renouncing sin, and reforming our lives, not in mere external rites. And it is not enough to put away some one particular sin, but we must put off the whole body of them. The old man must be crucified, and the body of sin destroyed, Rom. 6. 6. Christ was circumcised, and, by virtue of our union to him, we partake of that effectual grace which puts off the body of the sins of the flesh.

We have communion with Christ in his whole undertaking for our salvation, ver. 12. Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him. We are both buried and rise with him, and both are signified by our baptism, which is called the seal of the covenant, and is an obligation to our dying to sin; and also that we are risen with Christ,

as it denotes our obligation to our living to righteousness, or newness of life. God in baptism engages to be to us a God, and we become engaged to be his people, and by his grace to die to sin, and to live to righteousness; or put off the old man, and put on the new. And we are dedicated to the service of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, in whose name, as the God of our salvation, we are baptized. Without union and communion with Christ, and with the Father through him, and by the supply of his Spirit we can do nothing; but true Christians are complete in Him. They derive from his fulness all they want, and they are safe in his keeping, who is the Head of all principality and power. If we possess this privilege, we want not Jewish exploded ceremonies, or newly-invented superstitions. The circumcision of the heart, the crucifixion of the flesh, the death and burial to sin and to the world, and the resurrection to newness of life, implied in baptism, and connected with faith of the operation of God, sufficiently prove that our sins are forgiven, our debt is blotted out and cancelled, and that we are fully delivered from the curse of the law.

9. The Godhead, the fulness of the Godhead, and all the fulness of the Godhead, are strong expressions as can well be imagined, to denote that the Divine nature, with all its essential perfections, the very same as are in the Father himself, dwell substantially in Christ's human body.—*Guyse*. The apostle thus expresses the Divine nature of Christ, with an allusion, for the Jews, of the God of Israel dwelling in his temple, to oppose the ideas of the gnostics, and the local and partial deities of the heathen.—*See Whitby*.

11. Circumcision was an outward sign of inward purity and holiness.—*T. H. Horne*. By Him ye have been circumcised with a circumcision, not corporal but spiritual, namely that which consists in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, that is, in renouncing the sins to which the body and the flesh are prone, even with the circumcision of Christ, that spiritual circumcision which he requires.—*Bloomfield*.

12. Having engaged at your baptism to renounce sin, and walk in newness of life.—Through faith in, and dependence on the power of God.—*Bloomfield*.

—Not that baptism does this; but baptism is the seal of our burying with Christ. For the properties of the thing that is signified is often given to the seal. So here, to be buried is given to baptism, which is only the work of the Spirit of God, by faith in Christ, which buries sin in us.—*Cartwright*

Ver. 13-15. The apostle here represents the privileges of Christians.

1. Those who are in sin, are dead in sin. As the death of the body consists in its separation from the soul, so the death of the soul consists in its separation from God and the Divine favour. As a man who is dead is unable to help himself, so a sinner, though he has a natural power, or the power of a reasonable creature, has not a spiritual power, till he has the Divine life, or a renewed nature. The Gentile world lay in wickedness, they were dead in the uncircumcision of their flesh, being strangers from the covenant of promise, and without God in the world, Eph. 2. 11, 12. It may be understood of the spiritual uncircumcision or corruption of nature; and so it shows that we are dead in law, as a condemned malefactor is called a dead man, because he is under a sentence of death. And dead in state, by reason of the uncircumcision of our flesh. An unsanctified heart is called an uncircumcised heart; this is our state. Through Christ, we, who were dead in sins, are quickened; effectual provision is made for the taking away the guilt of sin, and breaking the power and dominion of it. Quickened together with him: by virtue of our union to him, and in conformity to him. Christ's death was the death of our sins; Christ's resurrection is the quickening of our souls.

2. Through him we have the remission of sin; Having forgiven you all trespasses. The pardon of the crime is the life of the criminal; and this is owing to the resurrection of Christ, as well as his death; for, as he died for our sins, so he rose again for our justification, Rom. 4. 25.

3. Whatever is in force against us, is taken out of the way. He has obtained for us a full discharge from the hand-writing of ordinances, which was against us, ver. 14; the ceremonial institutions, or the law of commandments contained in ordinances, Eph. 2. 15, which was a yoke to the Jews, and a partition-wall to the Gentiles. The Lord Jesus took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; When the substance was come, the shadows fled away. The expressions are in allusion to the ancient methods of cancelling a bond by crossing out the writing, or striking it through with a nail.

Since every mortal man is, through the hand-writing of the law, guilty of death, how very dreadful is the con-

dition of the ungodly and unholy, who trample under foot that blood of the Son of God, whereby alone this deadly hand-writing can be blotted out. And since the comfort of a troubled conscience consists in the blotting out of this hand-writing, we must labour to maintain by sure faith, not only that Christ has procured the blotting out of this hand-writing, but that it is blotted out as respects ourselves. Since in a case of debt, no one thinks himself safe till he sees with his own eyes, or knows for certain, that his bond is cancelled, so in this case of sin we shall not be at peace till we see, by the eye of faith, that the hand-writing of our sins is blotted out by the blood of Christ.—(78.)

This was against the Jews as well as the Gentiles, the apostle changes the person and includes both. Not only was it a heavy yoke for them to bear, but all its sacrifices and ablutions testified they were guilty and polluted, yet could not take away their sins. Thus the Jews were under condemnation by the testimony even of the ceremonial law, as well as for their additional sins from the multiplying of precepts. At the same time the Gentiles were under condemnation as transgressors, and were excluded even from the visible church.

4. Christ has obtained a glorious victory for us over the powers of darkness, ver. 15. Our Lord redeemed us out of the hands of Divine justice by a price; but out of the hands of Satan he redeemed us by power. He led captivity captive. The devil and all the powers of hell were conquered and disarmed by the death of the Redeemer. The first promise pointed at this; the bruising the heel of Christ in his sufferings, was the breaking the serpent's head, Gen. 3. 15. The Redeemer conquered by dying. See his crown of thorns turned into a conqueror's crown. He broke the devil's power, conquered him, and exposed him to public shame. The devil's kingdom had a mortal blow given it by the Lord Jesus. He tied them to his chariot-wheels, and rode forth conquering and to conquer; alluding to the triumph of a victorious general, triumphing over them in it, either in his cross and by his death; or, as some read it, in himself, by his own power; for he trod the wine-press alone, and of the people there was none with him.

Since Christ has obtained the splendid victory by dying upon the cross, this its glorious effect ought ever to be revolved in our minds against the scandal of the cross. And since Christ has overcome not only the devil, but all his satellites, as death, sin, and the rest of our foes, upon the cross, we must beware, and so live that they may appear broken and not as reigning over us. The apostle said, The world is crucified to me, and I unto the world, Gal. 6. 14. We may truly say this, if we despise the pleasures of the world and sin; but if not, we are enemies of the cross of Christ, Phil. 3. 18, 19.—(78.)

Ver. 16, 17. As Christ had cancelled the ceremonial law, let no man condemn the gentile believers because they disregarded it. And let not any of them trouble themselves about bigoted judgments which related to the distinctions of meats, or the Jewish festivals and solemnities. The sabbath under the Mosaic dispensation was a ceremonial, as well as a moral requirement. The appropriating a part of our time for the worship and service of God, is a moral and unchangeable obligation, but had no necessary connexion with the seventh day of the week, save as that was the time then appointed. The first day of the week, the Lord's day, is the time kept holy by Christians, in remembrance of Christ's resurrection. The sabbath day, in the New Testament, always signifies the seventh day of the week, the observance of which Judaizing teachers desired to impose upon the gentile converts. All these things were shadows of gospel blessings; but the truth and substance of them were of Christ, resulting from his Person, his work, and salvation, and consisting in the holiness, peace, communion with God, and heavenly rest bestowed on believers.

16. *Dwight*, in answer to *Paley*, states that this passage refers to the ordinary holidays of the Jews, or at most to the seventh day only, and not at all to the Christian sabbath, especially as the latter is not in the scriptures, and was not by the primitive church called the sabbath, but, "the first day of the week," and, "the Lord's day."

17. The apostle means to deprecate the superstitious observance of the holidays, or days of rest of the Mosaic law, not to discourage the keeping holy every seventh day, as practised by Christians. For keeping holy the seventh portion of our time, in addition to its vast general importance, and its salutary effect upon our re-

ligious feelings, we have our Saviour's own authority in several passages of the gospel.—*Shuttleworth*.

Ver. 18—23. The apostle cautions against those who introduced the worship of angels as mediators between God and them, ver. 18. It looked like humility to use the mediation of angels, as if we were conscious of unworthiness to speak immediately to God. But though it has a show of humility, it is a voluntary, not a commanded humility; therefore not acceptable. It is not warrantable; it is taking that honour which is due to Christ only, and giving it to a creature. The notions upon which this was grounded, were the inventions of men, not by Divine revelation; proud conceits which make men presume to determine things, without sufficient knowledge and warrant; intruding into those things which they have not seen, vainly puffed up by a fleshly mind. Therefore, though there was a show of humility in the practice, there really was pride in the principle. They advanced notions to gratify their own carnal fancy, and were fond of being thought wiser than other people. Pride is at the bottom of many errors, and even of evil practices, which have a show and appearance of humility. Those who worshipped angels, in effect disclaimed Christ, who is the only Mediator between God and man. It is the greatest insult to Christ, who is the Head of the church, to use any intercessors with God but him. When men let go their hold of Christ, they catch at what will stand them in no stead.

Our Lord Jesus Christ, is not only a Head of government over the church, but he is a Head of vital influence to it, ver. 19. The members are knit to him by joints and bands, as the several members of the body are united to the head, and receive life and nourishment from him. The body of Christ is a growing body. The new man is increasing, and the nature of grace is to grow. With the increase of God; with an increase of grace from God as its Author; with a large and abundant increase.

And the true Christian must not live in that which Christ died to take away. If ye are dead in Christ from these, why are ye as if ye lived in the world? They cannot live in that which their Head is dead unto. It is impossible for true

believers to live unto the fashions of the world. Though they are in it for place, yet their affection and conversation is in heaven, for they are called out of the world into a heavenly hope. And how far they are from knowing Christ, and the power of his death, whose life is altogether carnal, whose conversation has not the least character of heaven, may thence be shown unto them.

They are again warred against Judaizing teachers, ver. 20. If as christians ye are dead to the ceremonial law, why are ye subject thereto? Such observances as, Touch not, taste not, handle not, ver. 21, 22. Under the law ceremonial pollution was contracted by touching a dead body, or any thing offered to an idol; or by tasting forbidden meats, which all are to perish with the using; having no worth in themselves; and those who used them saw them passing away. They thought themselves wise in observing the law of Moses together with the gospel of Christ; but it was only a show of wisdom, mere invention and pretence. So they seem to neglect the body, by abstaining from meats, and mortifying their bodily pleasures, and appetites; but there is no true devotion in these things, for the gospel teaches us to worship God in spirit and truth, not by ritual observances; and through the mediation of Christ alone, not of any angels. True wisdom is, to keep close to the appointments of the gospel; in entire subjection to Christ, who is the only Head of his church.

To add voluntarily to the rule of duty, had a semblance of devotion and sanctity, but it implied that God had given a defective rule, and that he would accept what he had not commanded. Self-imposed austerities and abstinences, might have a show of extraordinary spirituality and willingness for suffering; but this was not "in any honour" to God, nor had it any thing valuable in itself. The whole tended, in a wrong manner, to satisfy the inclinations of the flesh, of the carnal mind, by gratifying self-will, self-wisdom, self-righteousness, and contempt for others.

But how foolish and unworthy of a reasonable creature to do a series of actions wherein we have no design! And that from week to week, or day to day, the seasons should return of which he has constantly this to say, "Now

comes the time of doing that whereof I can give no account why I do it;" that there should be so constant a consuming of portions of time, for that which a man can neither call business nor recreation, which tends to no advantage of any kind. This were the same as to proclaim one's self a fool or a vain trifler. The things being such as carry not with them so much as the show of wisdom, or so faint a show that they do his better part no good, and carry not that show in any provision for the satisfying of the flesh.—(40)

Let us not depart from the simplicity of our dependence on the Lord Jesus, and our devotedness to him. As dead with him to the world, and its wisdom and maxims, let us willingly bear his yoke, and steadily assert our freedom from human impositions. What he has left indifferent let us regard as such, and leave others to the like freedom, and remembering the passing nature of earthly things, let us endeavour to glorify God in the use of them.

18. *Doddridge* renders the first clause of this verse: Let no one who may desire it, deprive you of your prize by [an affected] humility, and the worship of angels.

—Some suppose there is a reference here, and in the following verses, to the doctrines and over-scrupulousness of the essenes, who, among other singularities, had peculiar views respecting angels. From affected humility some hold that direct access to God in prayer was presumptuous, and that prayers could only be presented and accepted through the mediation of angels. The worship of angels afterwards prevailed so much in that country that it was found necessary expressly to condemn it at a council held at Laodicea, A. D. 363. *Shuttleworth* considers that reference is here made to the gnostics. See general note.

—With reference to the worship paid to saints and angels in the Romish church, *Davenant* says, 1. Prayer is an act of the highest worship. It is for God alone to be every where present, hear the prayers of all that call upon him, deliver supplicants from evils, bestow gifts, and to be adored for his compassion. In the act of invocation these things are ascribed to saints and angels. 2. To make a vow to another is an act of the highest worship, due to God alone, Is. 19. 21; Ps. 50. 14; 76. 11. 3. To erect a house of religious worship, to raise altars and offer incense in honour of any one, is to pay Divine honour to him. All these the ancient heretics assigned to angels; these the papists assign to angels and saints.

21. These words must be understood to be uttered in a kind of scorn—see the wicked subtlety of the devil, he turns himself into all forms to ruin us. Once he destroyed the world by tempting man to eat, now he goes about to poison men's souls with restraining them from eating.—*Byfield*.

22. Doctrines, in this passage, include truths propounded to be believed or known. Commands imply laws which direct what is to be done or avoided; the latter depends upon, and are derived from the former.—*T. H. Horne.*

23 The word rendered "will-worship," means an affected or superstitious zeal for religion.—*T. H. Horne.* Ascetic severity is very consistent with spiritual pride.—*Bloomfield.*

CHAPTER III.

The apostle exhorts the Colossians to be heavenly-minded, as those that are risen with Christ, ver. 1-4. To mortify all corrupt affections, as those that are renewed after the image of God, 5-11, to cultivate mutual love, forbearance, and forgiveness, with other evangelical graces, 12-17, and to practise the relative duties of wives and husbands, children, parents, and servants, 18-25.

Ver. 1-4. As christians are made free from the obligation of the ceremonial law, they must walk the more closely with God in evangelical obedience. Let them set their hearts on heaven, and take them off from this world. It is our privilege, that we are risen with Christ, have benefit by the resurrection of Christ; and by our union and communion with him are justified and sanctified, and shall be glorified. From hence is inferred, that we must mind the concerns of the other world more than the concerns of this. He who is the believers' best Friend and our Head, has the highest dignity and honour in heaven, and is gone before, to secure to us the heavenly happiness; therefore let us seek what he has purchased at so vast an expense.

Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth, ver. 2, love them, and desire them. The heart soars upward upon the wings of affection, and is carried toward spiritual objects. Things on earth are here set in opposition to things above. We must not expect too much from them, but set our affections on heaven. As heaven and earth are contrary one to the other, supreme regard to both is inconsistent; and the prevalence of our affection to the one will proportionably weaken and abate our affection to the other. Three reasons are assigned for this, ver. 3, 4.

1. That we are dead; that is, to present things, as our portion. We are so in profession and obligation. And if we are thus dead to the earth, and renounce it as our happiness, it is absurd to set our affection upon it, and seek it.

2. Our true life lies in the other world. The new man is born and nourished from above. It is hid with Christ; not hid from us only, in point of *secrecy*, but hid for us, denoting *security*. The life of a christian is hid with Christ. Christ is at present one whom we have not seen; but this is our comfort, that our life is hid with him, and safe with him. The spring of that eternal life which abode in believers, and from which all their present comforts and activity were derived, was in Christ and his fulness. The streams of this living water flowed into their souls by the influences of the Holy Spirit, through faith; thus they were united to Christ, and had communion with him. He lived and ruled in them, and they lived by and to him. This is hidden from the world, which cannot understand the secret springs of the diligence and patience of saints in opposition to what appears to be their worldly interest and satisfaction. This life of faith and communion with an unseen Saviour, is hid from ungodly men and derided by them.

3. Because at the second coming of Christ we hope for the perfection of our happiness; when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, we shall also appear with him in glory, ver. 4. I live, yet not I, but Christ lives in me, Gal. 2. 20. He is the Principle and End of the christian's life. He lives in the believer by his Spirit, and the believer lives to him in all he does. To me to live is Christ, Phil. 1. 21. Christ is now hid; and the heavens contain him; but he will appear with his holy angels, and in his own glory, and his Father's glory, Mark 8. 38; Luke 9. 26. It will be his glory to have his redeemed with him; he will come to be glorified in his saints, 2 Thess. 1. 10, and it will be their glory to come with him, and be with him for ever. At the second coming of Christ there will be a general assembling of all the saints; and those whose life is now hid with Christ, shall then appear with him in that glory which he himself enjoys. Do we look for such happiness as that, and should we not set our affection upon that world, and live above this? What is there here to make us fond of it? What is there not in heaven to draw our hearts to it? Our Head is there, our home is there, our treasure is there, and we hope to be there for ever.

Let us therefore study more and more the hidden life of the christian; and considering Christ as our life, often anticipate in our thoughts the great day of his appearance, and dwell upon the blessed hope of our appearing with him in glory. But how dark are our views of these things! How little do we feel of the sanctifying and elevating influences of this hope! Let us earnestly pray for a more abundant communication of Divine grace, that deriving more and more of this spiritual life from Christ, we may have more suitable views of the life which his love designs for us.—(80.)

3 The celestial life of the christian is here represented as an invaluable jewel, and under a double security, reserved in heaven and laid up with Christ in God; secure, therefore, as the abode of Christ with the Father, or as the faithfulness and unchangeableness of the Father himself could make it.—*Doddridge*.

Ver. 5—11. Since it is our duty to set our affections upon heavenly things, it is our duty to mortify our members which naturally incline to the things of the world. Mortify them, kill them, suppress them, as you do weeds or vermin which spread and destroy all about them. Your members upon the earth; the corrupt affections of the mind, which lead to earthly things; the members of the body of death, Rom. 7. 24. Continual opposition must be made to all corrupt workings, and no provision for carnal indulgence; occasions of sin must be avoided: even lawful inclinations must not be suffered to extend to excessive and inexpedient desires. The members of the carnal nature, which seeks after earthly things, and neglects the heavenly, must be continually weakened and put to death. 1. The lusts of the flesh, for which the heathen and unbelievers were so very remarkable; the various workings of the carnal appetite and fleshly impurities, which are indulged in a worldly course of life, and which were so contrary to the christian state and the heavenly hope. 2. The love of the world; and covetousness, which is idolatry; an inordinate love of present good and outward enjoyments. Observe, covetousness is spiritual idolatry; it is giving that love and regard to worldly wealth, which is due to God only; and carries greater evil in it than is commonly thought. And it is very observable, that among all the in-

stances of sin which good men are recorded in the scripture to have fallen into, there is no instance in all the scripture of any such character being charged with covetousness.

It is necessary to mortify sins, ver. 6, 7; because if we do not kill them, they will kill us, ver. 6. We all are by nature children of disobedience; under the power of sin, naturally prone to disobey, Psal. 58. 3. The wrath of God comes upon all the children of disobedience. That we have formerly lived in sin is a strong argument why we should now forsake it, ver. 7. And as we are to mortify inordinate appetites, so we are to mortify inordinate passions; anger, wrath, malice, ver. 8; for these are contrary to the design of the gospel as well as grosser impurities. The gospel changes the higher as well as the lower powers of the soul, and supports the dominion of right reason and conscience over appetite and passion. And as the corrupt principles in the heart must be cut off, so the product of them in the tongue: as blasphemy, speaking ill of God; giving ill language to men, raising ill reports, and injuring their good name by evil communications. Also all wanton discourse, which comes from a polluted mind in the speaker, and propagates the same defilement in the hearers.

Lie not one to another, ver. 9. It is both unjust and unkind, and tends to destroy all faith and friendship among mankind. Lying makes us like the devil, the father of lies. The consideration that we profess to renounce all sin, and stand engaged to Christ, should fortify us against the sin of lying. Those who have put off the old man, have put it off with its deeds; and those who have put on the new man, are to put on all its deeds: not only to adopt good principles, but show them forth in a good conversation. The new man is said to be renewed in knowledge; because the grace of God works upon the will and affections by renewing the understanding. Light is the first thing in the new creation, as it was in the first creation. Man, in innocence, was made after the image of God; but that image was defaced and lost by sin, and is renewed by sanctifying grace.

There is now no difference arising from different country, or different conditions and circumstances of life, ver. 11.

It is the duty of every one to be holy ; and as much the privilege of one as of another, to seek from God the grace to be so. Christ came that all might stand on the same level before God both in duty and privilege. And for this reason, because Christ is all and in all. Christ is a christian's All, his only Lord and Saviour, and all his hope and happiness. And to all those who are sanctified, one as well as another ; whatever they are in other respects, he is All in all, the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End ; he is All in all things to them.

Ver. 12-17. We must not only cease to do evil, but learn to do well ; not only do no hurt to any, but do what good we can to all. The argument to enforce the exhortation, is very affecting ; Put on, as the elect of God, holy and beloved. Observe, 1. Those who are holy, are the elect of God ; and those who are the elect of God, and holy, are beloved ; beloved of God, and ought to be so of men. 2. Those who are the elect of God, holy and beloved, ought to be lowly and loving towards all men. Observe, what is to be put on in particular. 1. Compassion toward the miserable ; bowels of mercy, the tenderest mercies. Those who owe so much to mercy, ought to be merciful to all proper objects of mercy. 2. Kindness toward our friends. A courteous disposition becomes the elect of God ; for the gospel promotes friendship among men as well as reconciliation with God. 3. Humbleness of mind, in submission to those above us, and condescension to those below us. Not only humble behaviour, but a humble mind. 4. Meekness toward those who have been injurious to us. 5. Long-suffering toward those who continue to provoke us. Charity suffereth long, as well as is kind, 1 Cor. 13. 4. Many can bear a short provocation, who are weary of bearing it long. But we must suffer long, both the injuries of men and the rebukes of Divine Providence. 6. Mutual forbearance, in consideration of the infirmities and deficiencies which we all labour under. All have something to be borne with. 7. Readiness to forgive injuries ; forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any. While we are in this world, where there is so much corruption in our

hearts, and so much occasion of difference and contention, quarrels will sometimes arise. But it is our duty to forgive one another in such cases, and pass it by, copying the forgiveness through which we are saved. That we are forgiven by Christ so many offences, is a good reason we should forgive others.

Christ hath been gracious unto you. The Lord Jesus Christ is here mentioned as the Author and bestower of the greatest possible blessings.—(95.)

In order to this, we are exhorted, 1. To clothe ourselves with love, ver. 14. Above all things put on charity ; over all things charity, active or liberal love. Let this be the upper garment, the robe, the livery, the mark of our dignity and distinction. Let this be our principal and chief aim, as the sum of the second table, putting on love which is the bond of perfectness, that it may appear in every part of our conduct. Christian unity consists in unanimity and mutual love. 2. To submit to the government of the peace of God, ver. 15. Let the peace of God rule in your hearts ; it is of his working in all who are his. Let this peace rule in your heart ; prevail and govern there. As the peace of God in their hearts and consciences was the source of all their comforts, that peace should rule within them, that they might be influenced by such an example to live peaceably with all men. We are called to peace with God as our privilege, and peace with our brethren as our duty. Being united in one body, we are called to be at peace one with another, as the members of the natural body. Thanksgiving to God, helps to make us pleasant towards all men. Instead of envying one another on account of any particular favours and excellence, be thankful for mercies common to all. 3. To let the word of Christ dwell in us richly, ver. 16. The gospel is the word of Christ, which is come to us ; but that is not enough, it must dwell in us, not as a servant in a family, who is under another's control, but as a master who has a right to direct all under his roof. We must take our instructions and directions from it ; and our portion of meat and strength, of grace and comfort, in due season. It must dwell in us ; be always available to us, and have its influence and use. It must dwell in us richly. Many have the word of Christ

dwelling in them, but it dwells in them poorly; it has no mighty force and influence upon them. The soul prospers, when we are full of the scriptures and of the grace of Christ. The word of Christ must dwell in us, not in all notion and speculation, to make us learned, but in all wisdom, to make us christians, and enable us to conduct ourselves in every thing, as becomes children of the true wisdom. 4. To teach and admonish one another. This would contribute very much to our furtherance in all grace; for we improve our knowledge by communicating it for mutual edification. We must admonish one another in psalms and hymns. Singing of psalms is a gospel ordinance; the psalms of David, and spiritual hymns and odes, collected out of the scripture, and suited to special occasions, instead of the licentious and profane songs in the idolatrous worship of the heathen. But when we sing psalms, we make no melody, unless we sing with grace in our hearts, unless we are suitably affected with what we sing, and have true devotion and understanding. Singing psalms is a teaching ordinance as well as a praising ordinance; and we are not only to quicken and encourage ourselves, but to teach and admonish one another. 5. All must be done in the name of Christ, ver. 17; according to his command, and in compliance with his authority; by strength derived from him; with regard to his glory; and depending upon him alone for the acceptance of what is good, and the pardon of what is amiss. Whatever we are employed about, whether conversation, religious worship, business, or domestic concerns, or works of piety and charity, let us do every thing in the name of the Lord Jesus; in believing dependence on his merits and grace, in obedience to his precepts and for the honour of his name, giving thanks to God, even the Father, by him; as such services can only be accepted from sinners through his intercession. Whatsoever we do, we must still give thanks, Giving thanks always for all things. We give thanks to God and the Father in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Eph. 5. 20. Those who do all things in Christ's name, will never want matter of thanksgiving to God, even the Father. Praising him with grace in our hearts we shall

be led to do every thing in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God, even the Father, by him.

14. The eastern dress was completed by putting on the girdle or sash, which bound all together; thus all the qualities of the new man, all the excellences of the believer are bound together and brought into union by love.

16. The scripture is the word of Christ, 1. As Christ is the subject of it: the sum of the word is Christ. 2. As it is the proper inheritance and riches of the body of Christ. 3. As He is the conserving cause of it. 4. As He is the Author of it.—*Byfield*.

Ver. 18—25. The apostle concludes with exhortations to relative duties, similar to those in the epistle to the Ephesians. The epistles which are most taken up in displaying the glory of the Divine grace, and magnifying the Lord Jesus, are the most particular and distinct in pressing the duties of the several relations. We must never separate the privileges and duties of the gospel.

1. Here are the duties of wives and husbands, ver. 18. Submission is the duty of wives. It is the same word which is used to express our duty to magistrates. It is agreeable to the order of nature and the reason of things, as well as the appointment and will of God. But then it is submission, not to a rigorous lord or absolute tyrant, but to a husband, and to her own husband, who stands in the nearest relation, and is under strict engagements to affectionate duty. This is not in the Lord; it becomes the relation, and they are bound to it, in obedience to the authority and law of Christ.

On the other hand, husbands must love their wives, and not be bitter against them, ver. 19. They must love them with tender and faithful affection, as Christ loved the church, and as their own bodies; and even as himself, Eph. 5. 25, 28, 33, with a love peculiar to the nearest relation and the greatest comfort and blessing of life. And they must not be bitter against them; or use them unkindly, with harsh language or severe treatment; but be kind and obliging to them in all things.

2. The duties of children and parents. Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well-pleasing unto the Lord, ver. 20. They must be willing to do all their lawful commands, and be at their direction and disposal; and the obedience of their lives must pro-

ceed from the esteem and opinion of their minds. And this is well-pleasing to God, or acceptable to him. Dutiful children are the most likely to prosper. And parents must be tender, as well as children obedient, ver. 21. Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged. Let not your authority over them be exercised with rigour and severity, but with kindness and gentleness; lest you raise their passions, and discourage them in their duty. The ill temper and ill example of imprudent parents often prove great hinderances to their children.

3. Servants and masters. Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh, ver. 22. Servants are to do the duty of the relation in which they stand, and obey their master's commands, in all things consistent with their duty to God their heavenly Master. Not with eye-service, as men-pleasers; not only when their master's eye is upon them, but when they are from under their master's eye. They must be both just and diligent. In singleness of heart, fearing God; without selfish designs, or hypocrisy and disguise, as those who fear God, and stand in awe of him. The fear of God, ruling in the heart, will make people faithful in every relation. Servants who fear God, will be just and faithful when they are from under their master's eye, because they know they are under the eye of God. And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, ver. 23, with diligence, not idly and slothfully; or do it cheerfully, not discontented at the providence of God which put you in that relation. It sanctifies a servant's work when it is done as unto God; with reference to his glory, and in obedience to his command, and not merely with regard to men. We really do our duty to God, when we are faithful in our duty to men. And for servants' encouragement, let them know, that serving their masters according to the command of Christ, they serve Christ, and he will give a glorious reward at last. Though now servants, you shall receive the inheritance of sons. But, on the other hand, He who doeth wrong, shall receive for the wrong which he hath done, ver. 25. There is a righteous God, who, if servants wrong their masters, will reckon with them for it, though they may con-

ceal it from their masters' notice. He will be sure to punish the unjust, as well as to reward the faithful servant, and the same if masters wrong their servants. And there is no respect of persons with him. The righteous Judge of the earth will be impartial toward master and servant; not swayed by regard to men's outward circumstances and condition. Both will stand upon a level at his tribunal.

It is probable that there is particular respect, in all these instances of duty, to parties of different religions, as christians and heathens, jewish converts and uncircumcised gentiles. And if it hold in such cases, surely it is much stronger upon christians, one towards another, and where both profess the same religion. How happy would true religion make the world, if it every where prevailed, influenced every state of things, and every relation of life!

True religion teaches every man to do the work of his station heartily, to the best of his ability, and with cheerful diligence, as unto the Lord, and not unto men; expecting from him the gracious reward of the heavenly inheritance, as the servant of Christ in obedient faith. These principles alone will render men conscientious in all places and circumstances, from love to Christ, zeal for his glory, desire of recommending his gospel, and assurance of an interest in its blessings. But that profession which leaves persons regardless of relative duties, and giving just cause for complaint to those they are connected with, is very suspicious, and shows that they deceive themselves as well as disgrace the gospel. Let us then earnestly pray for grace to enable us to adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in these and in all other things.

25. The first verse of the next chapter should be read here.

CHAPTER IV.

The apostle exhorts masters to do their duty towards servants, ver. 1. Recommends to persons of all ranks the general duties of perseverance in prayer, and christian prudence in behaviour and speech, 2—6. Refers to Tychicus and Onesimus, for an account of the state of his affairs, 7—9. Sends salutations from several, by name, together with his own; and adding a charge to Archippus, concludes with his usual benediction, 10—18.

Ver. 1. The apostle proceeds with the duty of masters to their servants, which should have been joined to the foregoing chapter, as relating to the same social duties. Justice is required of them; not only strict justice, but equity and kindness; and this, though they are employed in the lowest offices, and are of another country and a different religion from their masters. A good reason is given for this regard; Knowing that ye also have a Master in Heaven. Ye are not lords of yourselves, but are accountable to one above you. Deal with your servants as you expect God should deal with you; and as those who believe you must give an account. Ye are all servants of the same Lord in the different relations in which you stand, and are equally accountable to him at last.

Ver. 2—6. For the right performance of the duties which had been mentioned, the apostle exhorted them to continue steadily in prayer, watching against whatever might hinder, or render them indisposed to that duty, but persevering under discouragements and expressing thanksgivings for mercies continually received. No duties can be performed aright, unless we persevere in fervent prayer and watch therein with thanksgiving.

The apostle also desired them to pray for him, and his brethren in the ministry; that God would give opportunities and boldness to speak the mystery of Christ, for which he was then a prisoner; that he might make known the counsel of God concerning the way of salvation, and the calling of the gentiles. The people are to pray particularly for their ministers, and to bear them upon their hearts at all times at the throne of grace. The best and most eminent christians need the prayers of meaner christians, and are not above asking them. The chief speakers need prayer, that God would give them a door of utterance, and that they may speak as they ought to speak.

The apostle further exhorts believers to right conduct toward the heathen, ver. 5. Walk in wisdom toward them that are without. Be careful, in all your converse with them, to get no hurt by them, nor contract any of their customs; for evil communications corrupt good man-

ners. Do not increase their prejudices against religion, and give them any just occasion of dislike. Do them all the good you can, and recommend religion to them by all the fittest means. Diligence in redeeming time very much recommends religion to the good opinion of others. And walking cautiously and with circumspection, so as to give them no advantage against you. Walk circumspectly, because the days are evil, dangerous, or times of trouble and suffering. Great wisdom and care are required in all our conduct towards those of the world with whom we are connected in relative life, or engaged in the concerns of business. They will strictly watch our whole behaviour, will make little allowance for our faults, will often be the means of bringing us into trial or temptation, and even what is only an indiscretion may cause a lasting prejudice against the truth.

Let all your discourse be discreet and seasonable, as becomes christians, and with a reference to your profession, ver. 6. Though it be not always of grace, it must be always *with* grace, and though our discourse be of that which is common, yet it must be in a christian manner, seasoned with salt. Grace is the salt which seasons our discourse, and keeps it from corrupting. We need much wisdom and grace to give proper answers to every man: particularly in answering the questions and objections of adversaries; giving the reasons of our faith, and showing the unreasonableness of their exceptions and cavils, to the best advantage for our cause, and least prejudice to ourselves, 1 Pet. 3. 15. Thus they would know how to answer every man whether he seriously inquired into the nature of christianity, and desired information upon some difficulty, or whether he was only inclined to dispute; for meekness of heavenly wisdom would teach a right answer on every occasion, and preserve them from contentions.

The salt, not of bitter and satirical jesting, but of Divine wisdom, is required, that noisome, putrifying and profane discourse may be put away, and what we speak may be ordered upon a right survey of time, place, and company. It is not enough to answer to that wherein we are questioned, unless we answer in the right manner also.—(79 f)

3. *Why* justly remarks that Paul, who so

often and so earnestly intreats the intercession of his christian friends, surely would have spoken of the intercession of the virgin Mary, or of departed saints, if he had believed it a duty to seek it.

—Paley remarks that here and Eph. 4. 1, St. Paul attributes his imprisonment not to his speaking of christianity, but to his asserting the right of the gentiles to be admitted into it without conforming to the Jewish law, which he notices as a circumstance of close conformity between the history and letters of the apostle.

Ver. 7—9. The apostle does not give an account of his present state; Tychicus would do it fully. The churches cannot but be concerned for ministers. He gives him this character, A beloved brother and faithful minister. Faithfulness in any one is truly lovely, and renders him worthy our affection and esteem. And a fellow-servant in the Lord. Ministers are servants to Christ, and fellow-servants to one another. They have one Lord, though they have different stations and capacities of service. It adds much to the excellency and strength of the gospel ministry, when ministers are affectionate one to another. Paul was as desirous to hear from them, as they could be to hear from him; and thought himself as much obliged to sympathize with them, ver. 8. It is a great comfort under the troubles and difficulties of life, to have fellow-christians affectionately concerned for us.

Oncimus was sent from Rome with Tychicus. This was he who had been servant to Philemon. He was converted at Rome, whither he had fled from his master's service. Though he was a poor servant, and had been a bad man, yet, being now a convert, Paul calls him a faithful and beloved brother. Circumstances of life make no difference in the spiritual relation among sincere christians: they partake of the same privileges, and are entitled to the same regards. Friendly correspondence among faithful ministers and servants of Christ will help forward the communion of saints, excite their prayers for each other, and tend to comfort their hearts. What amazing changes Divine grace makes! Faithless servants become faithful and beloved brethren, and some who have misconducted themselves, become fellow-workers!

Ver. 10—18. The apostle mentions others, as Aristarchus, a fellow-prisoner, Acts 27. 2. Those joined in services

and sufferings, should be thereby endeared to one another. Marcus, sister's son to Barnabas. Paul differed with Barnabas, on the account of this Mark, yet we find he is not only reconciled himself, but recommends him to the churches, and gives an example of a truly christian and forgiving spirit. If men have been guilty of a fault, it must not be always remembered against them. We must forgive, as well as forgive.

One who is called Jesus, or Joshua, his Jewish name, and Justus, his Roman or Latin name, ver. 11. The apostle had comfort in the communion of saints and ministers. One is his fellow-servant, another his fellow-prisoner, and all his fellow-workers, working out their own salvation, and endeavouring to promote the salvation of others. Good ministers take comfort in their fellow-workers unto the kingdom of God. Their friendship and converse together are refreshing under their sufferings and difficulties.

Epaphras, ver. 12, is the same as Epaphroditus. He had learned of Paul to be much in prayer for his friends. He laboured in prayer; always laboured fervently for them. Those who would succeed in prayer, must take pains in prayer; and we must be earnest in prayer, not only for ourselves, but for others also. The effectual, fervent prayer is the prevailing prayer, and availeth much, Jam. 5. 16. His prayer was, That ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God, ver. 12. We should always labour fervently in prayer for those connected with us, that they may stand perfect and complete in the whole will of God. The apostle was witness for Epaphras, that he was much concerned for the christian interest.

Luke is here mentioned. He was a physician and an evangelist. Christ himself both taught and healed, and was the great Physician as well as Prophet of the church. He was the beloved physician; one who recommended himself more than ordinary to the affections of his friends. Medical skill may be improved to extensive usefulness and esteem among christians. Also Demas, who afterwards revolted, 2 Tim. 4. 10. Many who have made a great profession, and gained a name among christians, have yet shamefully apostatized.

The brethren in Laodicea are here mentioned, as near Colosse. Paul directs

that this epistle should be read in the church of the Laodiceans, ver. 16. that a copy of it should be sent thither, to be read publicly in their congregation. Nymphas lived at Colosse, and had a church in his house; a religious family, where worship was daily performed; or some part of the congregation met there, when forced to assemble in private for fear of their enemies. In the former sense it shows exemplary piety; in the latter zeal and public spirit.

They are bid to admonish Archippus, to be diligent and careful of all the parts of his work as a minister, and to persevere in it unto the end. The ministry is by God's appointment. Those who have received it, must do the full duty of it. They betray their trust who do this work of the Lord negligently. Their people may put their ministers in mind of their duty, and excite them to it. Say to Archippus, Take heed to the ministry; though, no doubt, with decency and respect, not from pride and conceit. For the smiles, flatteries, or frowns of the world; the spirit of error, or the working of self-love, lead many to a way of preaching and living which comes far short of fulfilling their ministry. But preaching the same doctrine as Paul, and following his example, we may expect the Divine favour and blessing.

Concerning Paul himself, ver. 18. The salutation of me Paul. Remember my bonds. These words he wrote with his own hand. Remember I am in bonds as the apostle of the gentiles, and let that confirm your faith in the gospel of Christ; it adds weight to his ex-

hortation; Grace be with you. The free favour of God, and all good, the blessed fruits and effects of it, be with you, and be your portion.

11. *Paley* here notices a minute coincidence which should not be passed over. Some names being mentioned as of the circumcision, or jews, the others, it is inferred, were not so. Among the latter is Luke, the penman of the Acts, and in Acts 1. 19, we find an observation apparently by the historian, who speaking of the hebrew language calls it "their proper tongue," an expression not likely to have been used by a jew, but suitable to a gentile writing of jews.

16. Considerable difference of opinion exists as to what epistle is here meant. It appears evidently to refer to an epistle from Paul, which the Laodiceans had received, and which the Colossians were to procure from Laodicea, when they communicated their own epistle to the Laodiceans. The question is, which, and where is this epistle, but it is plain that the epistles written by the apostle were intended to benefit other churches, besides those to which they were addressed. 1. There is a writing extant called Paul's epistle to the Laodiceans; but it is evidently a forgery, made up of passages from the other epistles, and contains nothing which is not better and more fully explained in the epistle to the Colossians. 2. Some suppose it refers to an epistle which has been lost; but there is nothing to support this excepting conjecture, and had the apostle written expressly to the Laodiceans, he would in that have saluted Nymphus who was a Laodicean, rather than when writing to the Colossians. 3. The best and most general explanation seems to be, that the epistle referred to was written partly, but not solely, for the use of the Laodiceans. This epistle, in all probability is that to the Ephesians, for Laodicea was within the circuit of which Ephesus was the metropolis. See *T. H. Horne*. *Dodderidge* remarks, that this supposition may be rather be adopted, as the epistle to the Ephesians has nothing peculiarly referring to the state of that church, but much of common concern to all christians, particularly gentile converts. *Bloomfield* considers it to have been in some measure a circular epistle.

The epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians should be read together. The one is often a commentary on the other, and the meaning is respectively determined by parallel or corresponding passages, which are pointed out in the following list.

Eph.	Col.
Ch. 1. 1, 2.	1. 1, 2.
6, 7.	13.
10.	19, 20.
15, 16.	3, 4.
17—21.	9—15.
18.	16, 18.
20, 11. }	
19. }	
2. 1—5. }	2. 12, 13.
1.	1. 21.
13, 16.	{ 1. 20.
	{ 2. 14.
3. 1.	1. 24, 25.
3.	26—29.
4. 2, 4.	2. 12—15.

Eph	Col.
Ch. 4. 16.	2. 19.
22—25.	3. 9, 10.
17—21.	{ 1. 21.
	{ 2. 6.
	{ 3. 8, 10.
20.	4. 6.
32.	3. 12, 13.
31.	8.
5. 5—8.	5—8.
15, 16.	4. 5.
18—20.	3. 16, 17.
21, 23.	{ 18—25.
6. 1—9.	{ 4. 1.
18—20.	2—4.
21, 22.	7—9.

THE FIRST EPISTLE TO THE THESSALONIANS.

AN account of the first preaching of christianity at Thessalonica by the apostle Paul is given Acts ch 17. The unbelieving jews soon compelled him to flee to Berea, from whence he proceeded to Athens and Corinth. Being prevented from visiting the Thessalonians again, he sent Silas and Timothy, and on their return, Acts 18. 5, he wrote his first epistle to them, about a.d. 52, from Corinth.

This epistle is generally considered to have been the first of those written by St. Paul, and we find him anxious that it should be read to all the christian churches in Macedonia. The immediate occasion of his writing seems to have been the good report, brought by Timothy, of their steadfastness in the faith of the gospel. It is full of affection and confidence, and more consolatory and practical, and less doctrinal, than some of the other epistles, and rises to a high tone of earnest and energetic eloquence. Its contents may be stated as follows.

1. The apostle glorifies God for his grace toward the Thessalonians, and reminds them of the manner in which the gospel was preached to them, ch 1. 2. 1-16.

2. He declares his desire to see them, his affectionate anxiety on their behalf, and his prayer for them, ch 2. 17-20, and ch 3.

3. He exhorts them to grow in holiness and brotherly love, also to industry, ch 4. 1-12.

4. Contains exhortations against excessive sorrow for their brethren, who had departed in the faith; with admonitions concerning the coming of Christ to judgment, ch. 4. 13-18, 5. 1-11.

5. The epistle concludes with practical advice and instructions.

Paley remarks that the accordance between his epistle and the history in the Acts of the Apostles is circumstantial and complete in many points. Thus, the sufferings of the apostle and his companions at Philippi, Acts 16, are mentioned, ch 2. 2. The tumult at Thessalonica, Acts 17. 5, see ch 3. 4. Paul, Silas and Timothy were together at Thessalonica, Acts 18. 5, see ch. 2. 17. He also refers to facts noticed in the epistle but not mentioned in the Acts, as a visit St. Paul had intended to pay to them, ch. 2. 18, 3. 10, 11; and observes that a person conscious of his own purpose may probably mention it in a letter, though his historian is likely to be silent, if not ignorant respecting it. Thus it is evident that the materials of neither of these writings were derived from the other.

CHAPTER I.

The apostle salutes the church at Thessalonica, and blesses God for them, and declares that their faith, love, and patience, are evident tokens of their election, which was manifested in the efficacious manner with which the gospel came to them, ver. 1-5. And describes its powerful and exemplary effects upon their hearts and lives, 6-10.

Ver. 1-5. The inspired apostle and writer of this epistle, makes no mention of his apostleship, which was not doubted by the Thessalonians. He joins Silvanus, or Silas, and Timothy with himself; expressing thereby his affection for the Thessalonians, to whom they were so well known. This epistle was written to the converted jews and gentiles in Thessalonica. They were a christian church, because they believed in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ. The gentiles among

them were turned to God from idols, and the jews among them believed Jesus to be the promised Messiah. Grace and peace are well joined together, in the salutation or apostolical benediction; for the free grace and favour of God, are the spring and fountain of all the peace and prosperity we do or can enjoy. Grace and peace, and all spiritual blessings, come to us from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ; from God, the original of all good, and from the Lord Jesus, the purchaser of all good for us; from God in Christ, and so our Father in covenant, because he is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. As all good cometh from God, so no good can be hoped for by sinners but from God in Christ. And the best good may be expected from God, as our Father, for the sake of Christ.

Being about to mention things that were a joy to him, praise-worthy in them, and greatly for their advantage, he begins by thanksgiving to God, the Author of all the good that comes to us, or is done by us, at any time. Even when we do not actually give thanks to God by our words, we should have a grateful sense of God's goodness upon our minds. He joined prayer with his praise or thanksgiving. We should pray, not only for ourselves, but for others also; for our friends, and make mention of them in our prayers; at least, we should have their persons and circumstances in our minds; remembering them without ceasing.

The grounds and reasons of his thanksgiving were, 1. Their faith, and their work of faith. Wherever there is a true faith, it will work: it will influence both the heart and life. We have comfort in our own faith and the faith of others, when we perceive the work of faith. Jam. 2, 18. 2. Their love, and the labour of love. Faith works by love: it shows itself in the exercise of love to God, and love to our neighbour. 3. Their hope, and the patience of hope. Wherever there is a well-grounded hope of eternal life, this will appear by the exercise of patience: in patiently bearing the trials and afflictions of the present time, and patiently waiting for the glory to be revealed. For if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it, Rom. 8, 25. This living hope rendered them patient, and constant in their adherence to Christ, in the midst of tribulations and persecutions. 4. The Object and efficient Cause of these graces—our Lord Jesus Christ. Also he notices their sincerity. God's eye is always upon us; and it is a sign of sincerity, when in all we do we endeavour to approve ourselves to God.

He mentions the fountain from whence these graces flowed, ver. 4. The election of the Thessalonians was known to the apostle, and might be known to themselves, by the fruits and effects thereof—their sincere faith, and hope, and love; by the successful preaching of the gospel among them. Observe, *First*, All those who in the fulness of time are effectually called and sanctified, were from eternity elected and chosen to salvation. *Secondly*, The election of God is of his own good pleasure and mere

grace, not for the sake of any merit in them who are chosen. *Thirdly*, The election of God may be known by the fruits thereof. *Fourthly*, Whenever we are giving thanks to God for his grace, either to ourselves or others, we should trace the streams to the fountain, and thank God for his electing love.

Another ground or reason is, the success of his ministry. He was thankful on his own account as well as theirs, that he had not laboured in vain. Their ready acceptance and entertainment of the gospel he preached, were evidence of their being elected and beloved of God, ver. 5. He takes notice with thankfulness,

1. That the gospel came to them, not in word only, but in power. By this we may know our election, if we not only speak of the things of God with our lips, but feel their influence on hearts, mortifying our lusts, weaning us from the world, and raising us up to heavenly things. The gospel had not been left to natural efficacy, or to the power of arguments and persuasions upon their minds, for numbers had thus heard it, and continued in their idolatry and iniquities, or were become mere formal professors.

2. It came in the Holy Ghost, that is with the powerful energy of the Divine Spirit. Whenever the gospel comes in power, it is to be attributed to the operation of the Holy Ghost: and unless the Spirit of God accompanies the word of God, it will be to us a dead letter. This cannot relate to miracles only; for many who continued unbelieving saw miracles; but the new-creating power of the Holy Spirit, accompanying the word, produced a full conviction of its nature and importance, and such an assurance of faith and hope as induced them to embrace and profess the gospel.

3. The gospel came to them in much assurance. Thus did they entertain it by the power of the Holy Ghost. They were fully convinced of the truth of it, so as not to be easily shaken in mind by objections and doubts; they were willing to leave all for Christ, and to venture their souls and everlasting condition upon the truth of the gospel revelation. Their faith was the evidence of things not seen; and the Thessalonians thus knew what manner of men the apostle and his fellow-labourers were among

them; what they did for their sake, and with what good success. Let all who set forth the gospel, and all who love it, pray without ceasing, that it may every where, and at all times, be attended by the Divine power of the Holy Spirit, producing that full assurance of its truth and importance, which alone will induce men to break through all hindrances and make all sacrifices, that they may follow Christ and be partakers of his salvation.

3. These are hebraisms for active faith, labours love, and patient hope, and might have been so translated — *Doddridge*.

Ver. 6—10. Here is evidence of the apostle's success among the Thessalonians. They were careful to copy the good examples of the apostle and ministers of Christ. Herein they became followers of the Lord, who is the perfect example we must strive to imitate. The Thessalonians acted thus, notwithstanding the affliction to which they were exposed. They were willing to share the sufferings that attended the embracing and professing christianity, and followed the example of the suffering apostles, joyfully, with joy in the Holy Ghost; such solid and spiritual and lasting joy as the Holy Ghost is the Author of, who, when our afflictions abound, makes our consolations to abound much more.

They received good impressions from the preaching and conversation of the apostles, and their conversation had an influence upon others. Their example reached beyond Thessalonica. When numbers of careless, ignorant, and immoral persons are turned from their idols and iniquities, their carnal pursuits and connexions, to serve the living and true God; to believe in and obey the Lord Jesus, to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, to live soberly, righteously and godly, the matter speaks for itself: it is a work of God which will be known by its own light.

The word of the Lord, and its wonderful effects on the Thessalonians, was well known in the regions about: so that, from the good success of the gospel, many were encouraged to entertain it, and to be willing to suffer for it. Their faith was spread abroad. The readiness of their faith was famed abroad. These Thessalonians embraced the gospel as soon as it was preached

to them. They noticed the labours and conduct of the apostles when they came among them. The effects of their faith were famed abroad. They quitted idolatry. They gave themselves up to the living and true God, and devoted themselves to his service. They set themselves to wait for the Son of God from heaven, ver. 10. And this is one of the peculiarities of our holy religion, to wait for Christ's second coming, as those who believe he will come, and hope he will come to our joy. The believers under the Old Testament waited for the coming of the Messiah, and believers now wait for his second coming; he is yet to come. And God has raised him from the dead, which is a full assurance unto all men that he will come to judgment, Acts 17. 31. And there is good reason to hope and wait for his coming, because he has delivered us from the wrath to come. He came to purchase salvation, and will, when he comes again, bring salvation with him, full and final deliverance from sin, and death, and hell: from that wrath which is yet to come upon unbelievers 2 Peter 3. 7; and when it is come, will still be yet to come, because there is everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels, Matt. 25. 41.

Let us then examine with seriousness, and with diligence, to make our calling and election sure: if we have obtained this, let us remember the price which our deliverance cost, the great Redeemer, that we may devotedly obey, and cheerfully suffer for him. But let those take warning who are conscious they have not experienced this deliverance. Let them without delay flee from the wrath to come, and seek refuge in Christ and his salvation.

CHAPTER II.

The apostle, to encourage their progress in faith and holiness, reminds the Thessalonians of the manner of his preaching, and behaviour, ver. 1—12. And of their receiving the gospel, as the word of God, which effectually worked in them, 13—16. He assures them of his joy on their account, and his desire of coming to them again, 17—20.

Ver. 1—6. The apostle's preaching was not vain and idle speculation, but the sound and solid truth, most likely

to profit his hearers. He had no worldly design in his preaching; it was.

1. With courage and resolution, ver. 2. The apostle was inspired with holy boldness, nor was he discouraged at afflictions, or opposition. He had met with ill usage at Philippi, as these Thessalonians well knew, see Acts 16; yet no sooner were Paul and Silas set at liberty than they went to Thessalonica, and preached the gospel boldly. Suffering in a good cause should sharpen holy resolution. The gospel of Christ, at first met with much opposition, and it was preached with contention, with great agony; which denoted the apostles' striving in preaching, and against opposition. This was Paul's comfort; he was neither daunted in his work, nor driven from it.

2. With great simplicity and godly sincerity, ver. 3. It was a great comfort to the apostle, that he preached and exhorted them to believe and obey the sincere and uncorrupted gospel. The gospel he preached, was without deceit, it was true and faithful. Nor was it of uncleanness. His gospel was pure and holy, worthy of its holy Author, tending to discountenance all impurity. The word of God is pure. And as the matter of the apostle's exhortation was thus true and pure, the manner of his speaking was without guile. He did not pretend one thing, and intend another. The reasons are in ver. 4. 1. They were put in trust with the gospel; and stewards are required to be faithful. The gospel Paul preached was not his own, but the gospel of God. 2. Their design was to please God, and not men. The gospel of Christ is not accommodated to the vain fancies and lusts of men, to gratify their appetites and passions; but designed for the mortifying their corrupt affections, and that they might be brought under the power of faith. 3. They acted as in the sight of Him who tries our hearts. This is indeed the great motive to sincerity, to consider that God not only sees all we do, but knows our thoughts afar off, and searches the heart. He is well acquainted with all our aims and designs, as well as our actions. And it is from this God who trieth our hearts, that we must receive our reward.

The evidences of the apostle's sincerity are these: 1. He avoided flattery, ver. 5.

He and his fellow-labourers preached Christ and him crucified, and did not aim to gain an interest in men's affections for themselves. Nor did they flatter men in their sins with vain hopes, or indulge them in any evil work or way. Even the approval of godly men may deceive, and interfere with our simplicity in aiming to please the Lord by faithfulness to our trust. 2. He avoided covetousness, ver. 5. His design was not to enrich himself by preaching the gospel. 3. He avoided ambition and vainglory, ver. 6: his ambition was to obtain that honour which comes from God, John 5. 44. and he would not burden them, by requiring a maintenance, though he might justly have done so.

Ver. 7—12. The apostle showed great mildness and tenderness. Such behaviour greatly recommends religion, and is most conformable to God's gracious dealing with sinners, in and by the gospel. He showed the kindness and care of a nurse that cherishes her children. This is the way to win people, rather than to rule with rigour. So should the ministers of Christ behave toward their people, 2 Tim. 2. 24. This gentleness and goodness the apostle expressed several ways. 1. By the most affectionate desire of their welfare; Being affectionately desirous of you, ver. 8. The apostle had a most affectionate love to their persons, and sought them, not their's; to gain them, not to be a gainer by them: he earnestly desired their spiritual and eternal welfare and salvation. 2. By great readiness to do them good; willingly imparting to them, not the gospel of God only, but also their own souls, ver. 8. The most tender feelings of their hearts went with their labours. They readily spent their strength, exhausted their spirits, and ventured their lives for believers, because they were dear to them. 3. By bodily labour, that his ministry might not be expensive and burdensome, ver. 9. To the labour of the ministry the apostle added that of his calling, that he might get his bread; and was willing to forego part of his rest in the night, that he might do good to the souls of men in the day. 4. By holy conversation, concerning which he appeals not only to them, but to God, ver. 10. The behaviour of the apostles was holy toward God, just towards men, and

unblamable; they were careful to give no offence either to those without, or to those who believed. Herein, said this apostle, do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men. Acts 24. 16.

Concerning the faithful discharge of the office of the ministry, ver. 11, 12, he could appeal to them as witnesses. We should not only be faithful as to our calling as christians; but in our particular callings and relations. Paul exhorted the Thessalonians, not only informing them of their duty, but exciting and quickening them to its performance, by proper motives and arguments. And he comforted them also, under difficulties and discouragements. He charged every one of them by personal addresses. He charged them as a father, with a father's affection rather than a father's authority, 1 Cor. 4. 14. As a wise and affectionate father uses persuasions, encouragements, and commands.

The manner of this apostle's exhortation ought to be regarded by ministers in particular; and the matter of it by them and all others: namely, that they would walk worthy of God, who hath called them to his kingdom and glory, ver. 12. Observe, 1. What is our great gospel privilege—that God has called us to his kingdom and glory. The gospel calls us into the kingdom and state of grace here, and unto the kingdom and state of glory hereafter: to heaven and happiness as our end, and to holiness as the way to that end. 2. What is our great gospel duty—that we walk worthy of God. We should live suitably to our profession and privileges, our hopes and expectations, as becomes those called with such a high and holy calling.

Even the most perfect fall far short of that holiness which is worthy of so great, so good, and so holy a God, who calls them thereto; which is worthy of means, so free, so powerful, and so wise by which he brings them to it; and which is worthy of his kingdom and glory, so abundant, so perfect, and so divine, for which he designs them. Let this expression, Worthy of God, be continually sounding in the ears of our faith. Our great business is to honour, serve, and please God, and to seek to be worthy of him.—(94)

9. 10 *Paley* shows that although Acts 17. only mentions Paul's resort to the synagogue at Thessalonica on three sabbath days, yet there is

nothing which shows that he did not remain and exercise his ministry there, among the gentiles, for a longer period, as this passage implies.

Ver. 13—16. The apostle is thankful for the success of his ministry among the Thessalonians, ver. 13, which is expressed, 1. By the manner of their receiving the word of God. The word of the gospel is preached by men like ourselves, men of like passions and infirmities with others. However, it is in truth the word of God, being contained, or evidently founded on, or deduced from the sacred oracles. Those are greatly to blame, who set forth their own fancies or injunctions for the word of God. They are also to blame, who, in hearing the word, look no further than to the words of men, who are only, or chiefly, pleased with the style, or the voice and manner in which the word is preached. We should receive the word of God, with affections suitable to its holiness, wisdom, truth, and goodness. The words of men are frail and perishing, like themselves, and sometimes false, foolish, and fickle: but God's word is holy, wise, just, and faithful; and, like its Author, lives and abides for ever. Let us receive and regard it accordingly. 2. By the wonderful operation of the word they received—"it effectually worketh;" ver. 13. Those who by faith receive the word, find it profitable. It wrought in their hearts repentance for sin, hatred of idolatry, faith in Christ, love to him and his cause, delight in God's service, and longing after eternal life. This converts their souls, and enlightens their minds, and rejoices their hearts, Psa. 19; and such as have this inward testimony of the truth of the scripture, the word of God, by its effectual operation on their hearts, have the best evidence of its Divine origin to themselves, though this may not convince others who are strangers thereto.

What is the cause why so many so little regard the word of God? why they doubt it and suspect it? why they are so soon weary, and feel not that reverence to it which it demands?—Because they think not, neither from whom it cometh, nor with whose blood it is sealed, nor for whose benefit it is written. Let us not be ashamed to yield to the word of God, to awaken all our senses, and to submit them and our wisdom and learning, and bodies and

souls unto it. Let us think thus with ourselves. These are the words of our gracious God. My God from heaven above, speaketh unto me that I may be saved. He speaketh to me, to keep me from error—to comfort me in the adversities and troubles of this life; and to lead me to the life to come.—(58)

The word wrought effectually in them, to be examples unto others in faith and good works, and in constancy and patience under sufferings, and trials for the sake of the gospel, ver. 14. If we are called to suffer, we are called only to be followers of the churches of God, Matt. 5. 12. Those in Judea first heard the gospel, and they first suffered: for the jews were especially enraged against their countrymen who embraced christianity. Bitter zeal and fiery persecution will break through all the bonds of nature, as well as contradict all the rules of religion. The apostle states concerning the unbelieving jews, ver. 15: what justified their final rejection, and the ruin of their place, and church, and nation, now approaching. They killed the Lord Jesus, and wished that his blood might be on them and on their children. They killed their own prophets: their fathers had done so: and they also had been a persecuting generation. They hated the apostles. They persecuted them. They pleased not God. Murder and persecution are most hateful to God, and no zeal for any true, or only pretended institution of religion, can excuse it. They were contrary to all men. Their persecuting spirit was a perverse spirit; contrary to humanity; contrary to the welfare of all men, and contrary to the sentiments of all men not under the power of bigotry. The means of salvation had long been confined to the jews. They were envious against the gentiles, and angry that they should be admitted to share in the means of salvation. Nothing tends more to any person or people's filling up the measure of their sins, than opposing the gospel, and hindering the salvation of souls. For the sake of these things, wrath was determined against them, and soon overtook them. When the measure of any man's iniquity is full, and he has sinned to the uttermost, then comes wrath, and that to the uttermost.

The pure gospel of Christ is ab-

horred by many, and the faithful preaching of it hindered in many ways. But those who would forbid the preaching it to sinners, to men dead in sin, do not by this please God. It is grievous that any persons should be misled by attachment to system, so as to countenance the conduct of those who are actuated by the very same spirit that influenced the jews of old, and would oppose such as resort to active measures for proclaiming the gospel to heathens, both abroad and at home.

Why should any man resist the wisdom of God, and deny the people the bread whereon they should feed, the light by which they may safely walk, the hearing and reading the word by which they may be turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God? They have cruel hearts, and are enemies to the glory of God, and to the salvation of his people, who thus deny them the knowledge of the scriptures.—(58)

14 We learn from Acts 17. 5, that the jews stirred up the gentile inhabitants of Thessalonica against the christians. See *Paley*.

15 The great detestation and abhorrence which the jews had for all other nations, considering themselves as the only people favoured and enlightened by God is noticed by heathen writers. *Dionysius Siculus* says, "they esteem all mankind as enemies." *Tacitus* says, "they bear hostile hatred against all others."

—The sufferings which shortly after came upon the jewish nation were not confined to Judea, but vast numbers of the jews were destroyed in other provinces of the roman empire.

Ver. 17—20. The apostle was involuntarily forced from the Thessalonians, ver. 17. Such was the rage of his persecutors. He was unwillingly sent away by night to Berea, Acts 17. 10. Though he was absent in body, yet he was present in heart. He still remembered them, and had a great regard for them.

Even his bodily absence was but for a short time; time is short, all our time on earth is short and uncertain, whether we are present with our friends, or absent from them. This world is not a place where we are always, or long to be together. In heaven holy souls shall meet, and never part more.

He earnestly desired, and endeavoured to see them again, ver. 17. But Satan hindered his return, ver. 18. Satan is a constant enemy to the work of God, and does all he can to obstruct it. But though the apostle was not able to be present with them, according to his de-

sire, they were his hope, and joy, and crown of rejoicing; his glory and joy. These are expressions of great and endeared affection and high estimation. And it is happy when ministers and people have such mutual affection and esteem for each other; and especially if those who sow, and those who reap, are enabled to look forward to rejoice together, in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming. And though the apostle could not come to them yet, and though he should never be able to come, yet our Lord Jesus Christ will come, nothing shall hinder that. And when he shall come, all must appear in his presence, or before him, and faithful people will be the glory and joy of faithful ministers in that great and glorious day.

May God give many such to all who serve him with their spirit in the gospel of his Son, and in the views of their increasing piety may they daily anticipate the glory and the joy with which they hope at last to deliver them to their Divine Master. (80)

CHAPTER III.

The apostle gives till further proof of his great affection, in his having sent Timothy to establish and comfort the Thessalonians, 1—

In his rejoicing at the good tidings of their faith and love. And in his praying for an opportunity of returning to them, ver. 6—10, and for their perseverance and increase in grace, till the coming of Christ with all saints, 11—13.

Ver. 1—5. The apostle gives an account of his sending Timothy to the Thessalonians, yet he was content, for their good, to be left alone at Athens. Paul calls him brother. This showed his desire to recommend him to the esteem of the churches. He calls him also a minister of God and his fellow labourer in the gospel of Christ. Ministers should look upon one another as fellow-labourers; and should therefore love one another, and strengthen one another's hands.

Paul was desirous that they might be confirmed in the choice they had made of the christian religion, and be comforted in the profession and practice of it. The more we find pleasure in the ways of God, the more we shall be engaged to continue and persevere therein. The

apostle's design was to establish and comfort the Thessalonians concerning faith, concerning the *object* of their faith, that Jesus Christ was the Saviour of the world; concerning the *recompense* of faith, which was more than sufficient to make up all their losses, and to reward all their labours. Paul was desirous that no man, no one among them, should be moved or shaken in mind; that they should not apostatize, or waver in the faith.

There was danger by reason of affliction and persecution for the sake of the gospel, ver. 3. And by reason of the tempter's subtlety and malice. The apostle was afraid, lest by some means the tempter had tempted them, ver. 5. The devil is a subtle and unwearied tempter, who seeks an opportunity to beguile and destroy us, and takes all advantages against us, both in prosperity and adversity; and has often been successful in his attacks upon persons under afflictions. Satan has often prejudiced the minds of men against religion, on account of the sufferings to which its professors are exposed. We have reason to be jealous over ourselves and others, lest we be ensnared by him. In the most peaceful times every professor should count his cost, and remember that the followers of Christ are appointed to suffer affliction. And Satan knows how to work upon their hopes, fears, desires, and aversions by the most subtle methods.

The apostle feared lest his labour should be in vain. It is the devil's design to hinder the good fruit and effect of the preaching of the gospel. If he cannot hinder ministers from labouring in the word and doctrine, he will, if he be able, hinder them as to the success of their labours. Note also, faithful ministers are much concerned about the success of their labours. No one would willingly labour in vain.

To prevent this he put them in mind concerning suffering tribulation, ver. 4. It is the will and purpose of God, that through many afflictions we must enter into his kingdom. The apostles were so far from flattering people with the expectation of worldly prosperity in religion, that they told them plainly they must count upon trouble in the flesh. Herein they followed the example of their great Master, the Author of our faith.

He sent to know their faith: whether

they remained stedfast under all their sufferings, whether their faith failed or not. Because, if their faith did not fail, they would be able to stand their ground against the tempter and all his temptations; their faith would be a shield, to defend them against all the fiery darts of the wicked, Eph. 6. 16. They were in danger, and christians should be forewarned of this, as they will thus be best preserved from being moved from constancy and stedfastness in the faith, by any artful devices of the tempter.

1. *Paley* shows that although the history in the Acts does not mention Timothy having been with the apostle at Athens, yet the incidental notices in Acts 17. 14, 16: 18. 5 render it probable that Timothy came to him there, was then sent back to Thessalonica, and afterwards rejoined the apostle at Corinth, which agrees with the indirect statement here, ver. 1—6.

Ver 6—10. Upon the return of Timothy from the Thessalonians, he made a good report concerning their stedfastness in the faith. Their love continued; their love to the gospel, and the ministers of the gospel; they had a good and kind remembrance of the apostles, and that constantly, or always. The thoughts of them, and what they had received from them, were very precious, they desired greatly to see them again. It is happy where there is such mutual love between minister and people. The world hates them, therefore they should love one another.

The apostle had great comfort from this good report, ver. 7, 8. It was easy to him to bear affliction, or persecution, or fightings from without, when he found the good success of his ministry in their constancy. His distress of mind on account of his fears within, lest he had laboured in vain, was in a good measure over, when he understood their faith and perseverance. This made the apostle strong and active in the work of the Lord. Thus he was not only comforted, but greatly rejoiced also; Now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord, ver. 8.

He seemed to live to some purpose, when his spiritual children stood fast in the faith, hope, love, and obedience of the gospel. The effects of this were thankfulness and prayer to God on their behalf. He was full of joy, and full of praise and thanksgiving, ver. 9. When we are most cheerful, we should be most thankful. What we rejoice in, we should give

thanks for. This is to rejoice before our God. His heart was enlarged with love to them, and with thanksgiving to God. He was willing to express the one and the other, as well as he could. As to thankfulness to God, this especially is very imperfect in the present state; but when we come to heaven, we shall do this better.

He prayed for them night and day, very frequently; in the midst of the business of the day, or slumber of the night, lifting up his heart to God in prayer. Thus we should pray always. And Paul's prayer was fervent prayer. When most thankful, we should give ourselves to prayer; and those we give thanks for, need to be prayed for. Those whom we most rejoice in, and who are our greatest comforts, must be our constant care, while in this world of temptation and imperfection.

In proportion to the anxieties of the minister for his people, will be his rejoicing when he finds that his beloved children stand fast in the faith, and walk in love, and that their remembrance of him and affection towards him, correspond with his feelings towards them. He will feel that he never can sufficiently thank God for all the joy he derives from them, and his soul will be drawn out in more fervent prayers to God continually for them.

There was something still lacking in their faith; Paul desired that this might be perfected, and to see their face in order thereunto. The best of men have something wanting in their faith, if not as to the matter of it by there being some mysteries or doctrines not sufficiently known or believed by them, yet as to the clearness and certainty of their faith, there being some remaining darkneses and doubtings; and at least as to the operations of it, these not being so conspicuous and perfect as they should be.

And one great end of the ministry of the word is to help faith forward towards perfection; that which was the instrument to beget faith, is also the means of increasing and confirming it, namely the ordinances of God in general, and the ministry of the word in particular. As faith cometh by hearing, so is it confirmed by hearing also.—(73.)

Ver. 11—13. In these words we have the earnest prayer of the apostle. He

desired to be instrumental in further benefiting the Thessalonians; and the only way to do so while at a distance, was, by prayer for them, with writing or sending to them. He desired that their faith might be perfected, of which he could not be the cause or author; and therefore prays for them. Prayer is a part of religious worship, and all religious worship is due unto God only. Prayer is to be offered to God as our Father. Prayer is not only to be offered in the name of Christ, but offered up to Christ himself, as our Lord and our Saviour.

He prays with respect to himself and his fellow-labourers, and on behalf of the Thessalonians, that he might have a prosperous journey to them by the will of God, ver. 11. The apostle knew that in God we live, and move, and have our being; that we depend upon God in all our motions and actions, as well as for the continuance of life and being; that Divine Providence orders all our affairs, and that it is owing thereto if we prosper therein; that God our Father directs and orders his children whither they shall go, and what they shall do; that our Lord Jesus Christ in particular directs the motions of his faithful ministers. Let us acknowledge God in all our ways, and he will direct our paths.

He prays for the prosperity of the Thessalonians, for the prosperity of their souls. 1. That they might increase and abound in love, ver. 12. Mutual love is required of all christians; that they have a charitable disposition of mind, and concern for the welfare of all men. Love is of God, and is the fulfilling of the gospel as well as of the law. Timothy brought good tidings of their faith, and of their charity and love, yet the apostle prays that it might increase and abound, according to the various exercises of that holy affection required by the commandments of God. We have need of the Spirit's influences in order to growth in grace; and the way to obtain them, is prayer. 2. That they might be established unblamable in holiness, ver. 13. This spiritual benefit is mentioned as an effect of increasing and abounding love: to the end that the Lord may establish their hearts. Holiness is required of all who would go to heaven; therein we must act so that we may not contradict the profession we make of holiness. Our

desire should be to have our hearts established in holiness before God, and to be preserved safe to the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ; and that we may be unblamable before God, even the Father, now, and be presented blameless before the throne of his glory, when the Lord Jesus will come with all his saints, when such desires and prayers will be fully accomplished. The Lord Jesus will certainly come, and come in his glory. When he comes, his saints will come with him: they shall appear with him in glory. Then the excellency as well as the necessity of holiness will appear; because without this no hearts shall be established at that day, nor shall any one avoid everlasting condemnation.

Then, and not till then, shall our holiness be perfected, our love improved to the likeness of the seraphim, all burning; then shall we obey with vigour, praise with cheerfulness, delight in God above measure, fear him without torment, trust him without despondency, serve him without weariness, without interruption or distraction, and be perfectly like to him, as well in holiness as in happiness, as well in purity as in immortality.—(73.)

CHAPTER IV.

The apostle exhorts the Thessalonians to purity and holiness in their lives, ver. 1—8. To brotherly love, a peaceable behaviour, and diligence in their secular callings, 9—12. And to moderate their grief for the death of godly relations and friends, in consideration of the glorious resurrection of their bodies at Christ's second coming; from which time all the saints, then dead, or living upon the earth, shall be ever with the Lord, 13—18.

Ver. 1—8. Here is an exhortation to abound in holiness. The apostle entreats the Thessalonians as brethren; he calls them so, and loved them as such. Because his love to them was very great, he exhorts them very earnestly. They were already examples to other churches; yet the apostle would have them make further progress in holiness. The very best should forget those things which are behind, and reach forth unto those things which are before. It is not enough that we abide in the faith of the gospel, but we must abound in the work of faith. They knew their Master's will, and could not plead ignorance

as an excuse. They had been taught of those who had converted them to christianity. The design of the gospel is, to teach men not only what they should believe, but also how they ought to live; not so much to fill men's minds with notions, as to regulate their temper and behaviour. The apostle taught them how to walk, not how to talk. Holy walking is most pleasing to Him, who is glorious in holiness. The rule according to which they ought to walk and act was the commandments given by the Lord Jesus Christ, by authority and direction from him, and agreeably to his will. The apostles had authority from Christ, yet that was to teach men what Christ commanded, not to give forth commandments of their own. And believers should receive such instructions, as readily as they do the most encouraging declarations of God's free grace, and everlasting love.

Their sanctification, in their entire separation from evil and consecration to God, in the renewal of their souls to the Divine image under the influences of the Holy Spirit, and their attention to appointed duties, constituted the will of God respecting them. In aspiring after this renewal of the soul unto holiness, strict restraint must be imposed on the appetites and senses of the body, and on the thoughts and inclinations of the will which lead to wrong uses of them.

It was especially needful that they should abstain from fornication, the vile abominations practised among the gentiles, that every one might possess his body as the receptacle for his rational soul, in a holy and honourable use of all the members, as instruments of righteousness to God: and thus avoid the vile practices of those who worshipped impure deities, and were strangers to the holy character, law, and truth of God. All that is contrary to chastity in heart, speech, and behaviour, is contrary to the command of God in the law, and to that holiness which the gospel requires. They must not overreach or defraud their brethren or neighbours in any matter, taking advantage of ignorance, necessity, or easiness to believe, or by any tricks devised by selfishness to impose upon the unwary. Such persons may escape detection, or being called to account by men, but the Lord will punish all secret fraud. Of

this the apostle had warned them. It is wholly inconsistent with the character of a christian to injure any in their property, reputation or connexions. This calls for vigilant care, else self-love, and the customs of those around us, will often lead us, without reflection, to break the golden rule of doing to others as we would they should do to us.

The Lord calls none into his family to give a license to live unholy, but that they may be taught and enabled to walk before him in holiness. And present impunity in sin, will only tend to heavier condemnation at the last. God does not call us into a state of peace with him, that we may go on in the practice of worldly lusts. The contempt of God's law and gospel is the contempt of God himself. He that despises, despises God, not man only. Some might make light of the precepts of purity and holiness, because they heard them from men like themselves; but they were God's commands, and to break them was to despise God. God hath given believers his Spirit; this intimates that all uncleanness, in an especial manner, grieves the Holy Spirit, and will provoke him to withdraw from us: and also the Holy Spirit is given unto us, to arm us against these sins, and to help us to mortify these deeds of the body, that we may live, Rom. 8. 13. In despising these exhortations, they did not despise the apostle, but God himself, who had given them his Holy Spirit, by whose inspiration these exhortations were penned.

6 The sin of uncleanness, especially adultery, is great injustice, and God will be the avenger of it; so we may understand these words. That no man go beyond or defraud his brother in any matter—in this matter, of which the apostle is speaking in the preceding and following verses.—*Meyo*.

The above is from the continuator of *Henry*, and is the view taken by most of the early fathers and commentators. *Bloomfield* states that most of the modern commentators understand the passage to mean cheating and extortion, and by "the matter" understand commercial transactions, but he considers that is not the proper meaning here, and that "the," which article is omitted in our translation, as *Middleton* observes, limits the sense to the context, namely, the breach of chastity, and that reference is made to the husband or father who is grievously injured; as the words have been rendered "That no one dare to transgress, or injure his brother in this matter." *Doddridge* would include this sense, but also take the more extensive signification, as to all cheating.

Ver. 9-12. The apostle need not to write to them concerning the reasons, nature, fruits, and blessed effects of the new commandment which Christ had given his disciples, for they were inwardly taught of God, by the enlightening of the Holy Spirit, to love one another. We should notice in others, that which is good, to their praise, that we may engage them to abound therein more and more. The apostle commends in them not their own virtue but God's grace; yet he notices the evidence they showed of the grace of God in them. Ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another, ver. 9. All who are savingly taught of God, are taught this lesson, to love one another. This is the characteristic of Christ's family. The teaching of the Spirit exceeds the teachings of men; and men's teaching is vain and useless, unless God teach also. The Thessalonians gave evidence of their being taught of God, by their love to the brethren in all Macedonia, ver. 10. A true christian's affection is to all the saints, though distant from him in place, and differing from him in some opinions or practices of less moment. They must be exhorted to pray for more, and labour for more. Those who are eminent in this or any other grace, need to increase therein, as well as to persevere unto the end.

Here also is an exhortation that they should study to be quiet, ver. 11. It is most desirable to have a calm and quiet temper, and to be of a peaceable and quiet behaviour. This tends much to our own and others' happiness; and christians should study, should be ambitious to be quiet. We should be industrious how to be calm and quiet in our minds, in patience to possess our own souls, and to be quiet towards others; or of a meek and mild, a gentle and peaceable disposition, not given to strife, contention, or division. Satan is very busy to disquiet us; and we have in our own fears what disposes us to be unquiet; therefore let us study to be quiet. It follows, Do your own business; when we go beyond that, we expose ourselves to much trouble. Those who are busy-bodies, meddling in other men's matters, generally have but little quiet in their own minds, and cause great disturbances among their neighbours. They seldom mind the other exhortation, to

be diligent in their own calling, to work with their own hands. Christianity does not discharge us from the work and duty of our particular callings, but teaches us to be diligent therein.

The exhortation is enforced. Thus we shall walk honestly, or decently, and creditably, toward them that are without. This will be to act as becomes the gospel, and will gain a good report from strangers, yea enemies to it. It is a great ornament to religion, when the professors of it are of meek and quiet spirits, diligent to do their own business, and are not busy-bodies in other men's matters. We shall live comfortably, have lack of nothing, ver. 12. People often by slothfulness reduce themselves to great straits, and are liable to many wants; while such as are diligent in their own business, live comfortably, and lack nothing. They are not burdensome to their friends, nor scandalous to strangers. They earn their own bread, and have great pleasure in so doing. When christians are thus industrious and contented, though in obscurity, paying to all their dues, devising to live within their means, and being ready to assist those more in want than themselves, they will be respected and adorn the profession of the gospel. And should distress and afflictions overtake them, they may expect assistance, as having a testimony in their favour in the minds of others.

Ver. 13-18. Here is comfort for the relations and friends of those who die in the Lord. Grief for the death of friends is lawful; we may weep at least for our own loss, though that may be their gain. Christianity does not forbid, grace does not extinguish our natural affections. Yet we must not be immoderate or excessive in our joys or sorrows; because this looks as if we had no hope, ver. 13. It is too much like those who have no hope of a better life. Christians have a most sure hope, the hope of eternal life; this, which God, who cannot lie, hath promised, should moderate our joys and our sorrows, on account of any worldly thing.

Ignorance concerning those who are dead may cause immoderate grief, ver. 13. Death is an unknown thing, and we are much in the dark about the state after death; yet there are some things,

concerning those especially who die in the Lord, of which we need not, and ought not to be ignorant; and if those things are rightly understood and duly considered, they will allay our sorrow.

1. They are fallen asleep in Christ, 1 Cor. 15. 18. Death is their rest, and is undisturbed rest. They rest from all their labours and sorrows, and they sleep in Jesus, ver. 14. Being still in union with him, they are under his special care and protection. Their souls are in his presence, and their dust under his care and power; so that they are not lost, nor are they losers, but great gainers, by death, and their removal out of this world is into a better.

2. They shall be raised up from the dead, and awakened out of their sleep, for God will bring them with him, ver. 14. The doctrine of the resurrection, and the second coming of Christ, is a great antidote against the fear of death, and undue sorrow for the death of our christian friends; and of this doctrine we have full assurance. Christ, being risen from the dead, is become the first-fruits of them that slept; therefore they who are fallen asleep in him, are not perished or lost, 1 Cor. 15. 18, 20. His resurrection is a full confirmation of all that is said in the gospel, or by the word of the Lord, which has brought life and immortality to light.

3. Their state and condition shall be glorious and happy at the second coming of Christ. Of this the apostle informs the Thessalonians by Divine revelation from the Lord Jesus. By this word of the Lord we know, that the Lord Jesus will come down from heaven, in all the pomp and power of the upper world, ver. 16. The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout. He will descend from heaven into this our air, ver. 17. The appearance will be with pomp and power, with a shout—the shout of a king, and the power and authority of a mighty king and conqueror, with the voice of the archangel; an innumerable company of angels will attend him; and the glorious appearance of this great Redeemer and Judge, shall be proclaimed and ushered in by the trump of God. For the trumpet shall sound, and that will wake those that sleep in the dust of the earth. The dead in Christ shall rise first, ver. 16. The first care of the Redeemer will

be about his dead saints; he will raise them before the great change passes on those that shall be found alive; so that those who did not sleep in death, will have no greater privilege or joy at that day than those who fell asleep in Jesus.

Those found alive, will then be changed. They shall be caught up in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air, ver. 17. Believers then alive will undergo a change so mysterious, that we cannot comprehend it, 1 Cor. 15. 51. But this mortal must put on immortality; and these bodies shall be made fit to inherit the kingdom of God, of which flesh and blood in its present state is not capable. This change will be in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, 1 Cor. 15. 52, in the very instant, or not long after the raising up of those that sleep in Jesus. And those who are raised, and thus changed, shall meet together in the clouds, and there meet their Lord, to receive the crown of glory he will then bestow upon them.

Nothing is here said respecting the wicked. When they rose would be of no great moment, since they would rise to perdition.—(75.)

It will be some happiness that all the saints shall meet, and remain together for ever: but the principal happiness of heaven is to be with the Lord, to see him, live with him, and enjoy him for ever. This should comfort the saints upon the death of their pious friends; that although death has made a separation, yet their souls and bodies will meet again. The dead and living saints shall meet together again, and shall meet our Lord, and be with him for ever, no more to be separated, either from him, or from one another for ever. And the apostle would have us comfort one another with these words, ver. 18. We should endeavour to support one another in times of sorrow; not deaden one another's spirits, or weaken one another's hands, but should comfort one another; and that may be done by serious consideration and discourse on the many lessons to be learned from the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, the second coming of Christ, and the glory of the saints in that day. May we, by realizing faith and hope, continually anticipate that solemn joyful period, and comfort ourselves and each other, with these words of truth and love.

What! comfort a man by telling him he is going to appear before the judgment-seat of God! Who can feel comfort from these words? That man alone with whose spirit the Spirit of God bears witness that his sins are blotted out, and the thoughts of whose heart are purified by the Holy Spirit, so that he can perfectly love him, and worthily magnify his name. We are not in a safe state unless it is thus with us, or we are hungering and thirsting after righteousness. If so, we shall be filled, for it is impossible that any should be taken away in their sins, while mourning after the salvation of God. They that seek shall find.—(11.)

13. The word rendered "hope" here signifies a sure and well-founded expectation—*Bloomfield*. The heathen had a hope and even a sort of expectation, but the ideas both of the people and the philosophers, concerning a future state, were clouded and grovelling, so that even their ablest reasoners expressed themselves with so much uncertainty and variation as only served to confound the common people, who were ready to fear that death might prove the utter extinction of the man.—See *Benson*.

15. "We" does not imply that the apostle thought he should live certainly till the last day, but having no certain revelation, he expresses himself indefinitely.—*Bloomfield*.

In the second epistle, St Paul removes the erroneous view some of the Thessalonians had taken of this passage, and thus any charge which some might have alleged against the infallibility of the sacred writings is entirely obviated.—See *Shuttleworth*.

16. "A shout," perhaps expressing the joy of the angels at this manifestation of our Lord. *Koppe* says, "The images used are derived from the triumphal entry of a king taking possession of a kingdom with an armed force."

CHAPTER V.

The apostle exhorts the Thessalonians to be always ready for the coming of Christ to judgment, which will be with suddenness and surprise, like a thief in the night, ver. 1—11. He directs to several particular duties in their relative and personal capacities, 12—22. And concludes with prayer, salutations, and a benediction, 23—28.

Ver. 1—5. It is needless or useless to inquire about the particular time of Christ's coming; Of the times and seasons, ye need not that I write unto you, ver. 1. It is certain that Christ will come, and a certain time is appointed for his coming; but there was no need the apostle should write about that, therefore he had no revelation given him; nor should they or we inquire into this, which the Father has reserved in

his own power. Of that day and hour knoweth no man, Matt. 24. 3, 6. Christ did not reveal this to the apostles; there are times and seasons for us to work in, these it is our duty and interest to know and observe; but the time and season when we must give up our account, we know not, nor is it needful that we should know them. There are many things that our vain curiosity desires to know, which there is no necessity for our knowing; nor would our knowledge of them do us good. Behold, now is the accepted time, the present time we ought to redeem; we ought to embrace the present season of seeking peace with God, and of doing his will, and then we shall be safe and happy under all events.

The coming of Christ would be a great surprise to men, ver. 2. Our Lord himself had said so, Matt. 24. 44. Mark 13. 35, 36. No doubt the apostle had told them of Christ's coming suddenly, which is the meaning of his coming as a thief in the night, Rev. 16. 15. Such a surprise will the day of the Lord be; so sudden and unexpected his appearance. The knowledge of this, will be more useful than to know the exact time, because this should awaken us to watch, that we may be ready whenever he cometh. As the hour of death is the same to each person, that the judgment will be to mankind in general, so the same remarks and illustrations answer for both.

Christ's coming will be terrible to the ungodly, ver. 3. Their destruction will be total, final, and sudden. It will overtake them in the midst of their carnal security; when they dream of happiness, and please themselves with vain amusements of their fancies or their senses, and think not of it. It will be unavoidable destruction. There will be no means to escape the terror or the punishment of that day. There will be no place where the workers of iniquity shall be able to hide. None are sure that death and judgment will not thus surprise them, unless they continually expect and prepare for these approaching events.

This day will be a happy day to the righteous, ver. 4, 5. They are not in darkness; they are the children of the light. This is the happy condition of all true christians. They were sometime

darkness, but were made light in the Lord. They were the children of the day, for the Day-star had risen upon them; yea, the Sun of righteousness had shone upon them with healing under his wings. They were no longer under the darkness of heathenism, or under the shadows of the law, but under the gospel, which brings life and immortality to light. Observe their great advantage on this account. It was their own fault, if they were surprised by that day. They had fair warning to provide against it, and might hope then to stand with comfort and confidence before the Son of man. This would be a time of refreshing to them from the presence of the Lord, who to them that look for him will appear without sin unto their salvation, and will come to them as a friend in the day, not as a thief in the night.

Since we continually see so many around us suddenly surprised into the eternal world, and fixed in that state in which judgment will find them, let us be very careful that the day of the Lord may not overtake us as a thief, but that we maintain a continual watch. How many are at this hour speaking peace and safety to themselves, over whose heads instantaneous destruction is hovering, such a destruction that they shall never be able to escape, never be able to recover from it. Let us endeavour to awaken ourselves and each other. Let us rouse ourselves and use the light, that by it we may despatch our labours, and be guarded against the sudden attacks of our spiritual enemies.—(80.)

1. Times, denote periods of considerable duration; seasons, denote particular portions of those periods, when some important events connected with them take place.—*Davidson*.

Ver. 6—11. On what had been said, seasonable exhortations to several needful duties are grounded. 1. To watchfulness and sobriety, ver. 6; we must not be secure and careless, or indulge spiritual sloth and idleness. We must be continually upon our guard against sin, and temptation to it. The generality are careless of duty, and regardless of their spiritual enemies. They doze away precious moments, on which eternity depends, indulging idle dreams; and have no more thoughts and cares about another world, than men that are asleep have about this. Either they

do not consider the things of another world at all, because they are asleep; or they do not consider them aright, because they sleep and dream. But let us watch, and act like men that are awake, and upon their guard. Let us also be sober, or temperate and moderate. Let us keep our natural desires and appetites, within due bounds. Sobriety is usually opposed to excess in meats and drinks, but it also extends to all other temporal things, Luke 21. 34. Our moderation, then, as to all temporal things, should be known to all men, because the Lord is at hand. It was not so strange if those who had not received the Divine revelation were lulled asleep by the devil in carnal security, and indulged in riot and excess; for it was night-time with them, they were not sensible of their danger, therefore they slept; they were not sensible of their duty, therefore they were drunk: but shall christians, who have the light of the blessed gospel shining in their faces, be careless about their souls, and unmindful of another world?

2. To be well armed as well as watchful: to put on the whole armour of God. Our spiritual enemies are many, and mighty, and malicious; they draw many to their interest, and keep them in it, by making them careless, secure, and presumptuous, by making them drunk with pride, drunk with passion, drunk and giddy with self-conceit; drunk with the gratification of sense: so that we have need to arm ourselves against their attempts, by putting on the spiritual breast-plate, to keep the heart, and the spiritual helmet, to secure the head; and this spiritual armour consists of the three christian graces, faith, love, and hope, ver. 8. *Faith*, for if we believe that the eye of God is always upon us, that we have spiritual enemies to grapple with, that there is a world of spirits to prepare for, we shall see reason to watch and be sober. True and fervent love to God, and the things of God, will keep us watchful and sober, and hinder apostasy in times of trouble and temptation. The good hope, through grace, of eternal life, will be as a helmet to defend the head. If we have hope of salvation, let us take heed of any thing that would shake our hopes, or render us unfit for the great salvation we hope to attain.

Christians hope for this salvation, 1. Because God hath not appointed believers to wrath, but to obtain salvation, ver. 9. Their conversion proved that God had not appointed them to endure the severity of his wrath, which their sins deserved, but had chosen them to obtain salvation of his free mercy. And the sureness and firmness of the Divine appointment, are the great support and encouragement of our hope. Were we to obtain salvation by our own merit or power, we could have no hope of it: but seeing we are to obtain it by God's appointment, which we are sure cannot be shaken, on that let us build unshaken hope, especially when we consider,

2. That salvation is by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, to atone for our sins, and to ransom our souls. Our salvation is owing to, and our hopes of it grounded on Christ's atonement, as well as God's appointment. And as we should think on God's gracious design and purpose, so also on Christ's death and sufferings, for this end; that whether we wake or sleep, whether we live or die, we should live with Christ, live in union and in glory with him for ever, whether we are dead or living at the coming of the Lord. And as the salvation for which Christians hope, is to be for ever with the Lord, so the foundation of their hope is, their union with him. If they are united with Christ, and live in him and live to him here, the sleep of death will be no prejudice to the spiritual life, much less to the life of glory hereafter. On the contrary, Christ hath died for us, that, living and dying, we might be his; that we might live to him while we are here, and live with him when we go hence.

They ought therefore to comfort themselves and each other, when they meet together, by mutual exhortations, and encouragements; thus to instruct and edify each other in faith and holiness. We should communicate our knowledge and experiences one to another. We should join in prayer and praise one with another. We should set a good example one before another. And it is the duty of those especially who live in the same vicinity and family, thus to comfort and edify one another; and this is the best neighbourhood, the best means to answer the end of society. Thus we shall feel the constraining power of grateful

love, and learn how to live to Him, with whom we hope to live for ever in glory.

7. To be drunk in the day time was considered among the ancients exceedingly disgraceful.

Ver. 12—15. Here observe, 1. The ministers of the gospel are described by the work of their office, which is weighty, honourable, and useful. Ministers must labour among their people with diligence, and unto weariness, so the word in the original imports. They are called labourers, and should not be loiterers. They must labour with their people, to instruct, comfort, and edify them. And rule their people, with love. They must not exercise dominion as temporal lords; but rule as spiritual guides, by setting a good example to the flock. They are over the people in the Lord, thus distinguished from civil magistrates, and this denotes also that they are but ministers under Christ, appointed by him, and must rule the people by Christ's laws, not by laws of their own. The end of their office, and all their labour, is the service and honour of the Lord. They must admonish the people, not only publicly, but privately, as there may be occasion. They must instruct them to do well, and should reprove them when they do ill. It is their duty not only to give good counsel, but also to give admonition; to warn the flock of the dangers they are liable to, and reprove for negligence, or what else may be amiss.

2. What the duty of the people is toward their ministers. They must know their persons, hear their voice, acknowledge them as pastors, and pay due regard to their teaching, ruling, and admonitions. They must esteem their ministers highly in love; they should greatly value the office of the ministry, honour and love the persons of their ministers, and show their esteem and affection, and this, for their work's sake, because their business is to promote the honour of Christ, and the welfare of men's souls. The work of the ministry puts honour upon those who are faithful and diligent; and will procure them that esteem and love, which otherwise they could not expect.

Other exhortations are given as to the duty Christians owe to one another.

1. To be at peace among themselves, ver. 13. Ministers and people should avoid every thing that tends to alienate

their affections one from another. And the people should be at peace among themselves, doing all they can to hinder any differences from rising or continuing among them.

2. To warn the unruly, ver. 14. There will be some who walk disorderly, and it is the duty of all christians, in their several relations of life, to warn and admonish them. Such should be re-proved for their sin, warned of their danger, and told plainly of the injury they do their own souls, and the hurt they may do to others. Love of peace among ourselves must not induce us to connive at sin.

3. To comfort the feeble-minded, ver.

14. By these are intended the timorous and faint-hearted, or such as are dejected and of a sorrowful spirit. Some are afraid of difficulties, and disheartened at the thought of hazards and losses, and afflictions; such should be encouraged, and a kind word may do much good.

4. To support the weak, ver. 14. Some are not well able to perform their work, nor to bear up under their burdens; we should therefore support them, and help their infirmities. It is the grace of God, indeed, that must strengthen and support such; but we should tell them of that grace, and endeavour to minister it to them, though we may be often wearied with their doubts, complaints, and mistakes.

5. To be patient towards all men, ver. 14. We must bear and forbear. We must be long-suffering, and suppress our anger, and this duty must be exercised towards all men. We must not be high in our expectations and demands, or harsh in our resentment, or hard in our impositions; but endeavour to make the best we can of every thing, and think the best we can of every body.

6. Not to render evil for evil to any man, ver. 15. This we must be very careful about, we must by all means forbear to avenge ourselves. If others do us an injury, that will not justify us in doing the same, or any other injury to them. It becomes us to forgive, as those that hope to be forgiven of God.

7. Ever to follow that which is good, ver. 15. In all circumstances, whether men do us good turns or ill turns; whatever men do to us, we must do good to others. Both among ourselves, in the

first place to them that are of the household of faith, and then, as we have opportunity, unto all men, Gal. 6. 10.

Ver. 16—22. Here we have short exhortations, which will not burden the memory, but will be of great use to direct our hearts and lives, for the duties are of great importance; and we may observe, how they are connected together, and depend upon one another.

1. Rejoice evermore, ver. 16. This must be understood of spiritual joy; for we must rejoice in creature comforts, as if we rejoiced not, and must not expect to live many years, and rejoice in them all; but if we do rejoice in God, we may do that evermore. If we are sorrowful upon any worldly account, yet still we may always rejoice, 2 Cor. 6. 10. A religious life is a life of constant joy.

2. Pray without ceasing, ver. 17. The way to rejoice evermore, is, to pray without ceasing. We should rejoice more, if we prayed more. We should pray without weariness, and continue in prayer, at stated seasons, occasionally, and with frequent ejaculations, till we come to that world where prayer shall be swallowed up in praise. The meaning is not, that men should do nothing but pray, but that prayer will help forward, and not hinder, all other lawful business, and every good work.

3. In every thing give thanks, ver. 18. If we pray without ceasing, we shall not want matter for thanksgiving, in every thing. We should be thankful in every condition, even in adversity. It is never so bad with us, but it might be worse. We never can have any reason to complain of God, and have always much reason to praise and give thanks. The apostle says, This is the will of God in Christ Jesus, concerning us, that we give thanks, seeing God is reconciled to us in Christ Jesus; in him, through him, and for his sake, he allows us to rejoice evermore, and appoints us in every thing to give thanks.

For sparing and preventing, for common and extraordinary, general and special, past and present, temporal and spiritual mercies; not only for prosperous and pleasing, but also for afflicting providences, for chastisements and seasonable corrections; for God designs them all for our good, though we at present see not how they tend unto it.—(99)

4. Quench not the Spirit, ver. 19, for the Spirit of grace and supplication helpeth our infirmities, assists us in our prayers and thanksgivings. It relates to the sanctifying and comforting influences of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of believers, which kindle a flame of sacred love in the soul. Christians are said to be baptized with the Holy Ghost, and with fire. He worketh as fire, by enlightening, enlivening, and purifying the souls of men. We must be careful not to quench this holy fire. As fire is put out by withdrawing fuel, and as it is quenched by pouring water, or putting a great quantity of earth upon it, so we must be careful not to quench the Holy Spirit, by indulging carnal lusts and affections, or minding only earthly things. Believers often greatly damp the holy ardour of their souls, mar their own comfort, and hinder their growth in grace, by not giving themselves up to the spiritual affections excited in their hearts by the Holy Spirit.

5. Despise not prophesyings, ver 20. If we neglect the means of grace, we forfeit the Spirit of grace. By prophesyings here we are to understand the preaching of the word, the interpreting and applying the scriptures; and this we must not despise, but should value, because it is the ordinance of God, appointed of him for our furtherance and increase in knowledge, and grace, and holiness, and comfort. We must not despise preaching, though it be plain, and without enticing words of men's wisdom, and though we are told no more than what we knew before. It is useful, and many times needful, to have our minds stirred up, our affections and resolutions excited, to what we knew before to be our interest and our duty.

6. Prove all things, but hold fast that which is good, ver. 21. Here is a needful caution to prove all things. We must search the scriptures, whether what is said be true or not. Every christian has, and ought to have his senses well exercised in discerning between good and evil, truth and falsehood, Heb. 5. 13, 14. And proving all things must be in order to holding fast that which is good. We must not always be seekers, or fluctuating in our minds, like children tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine.

7. Abstain from all appearances of

evil, ver. 22. This is a good means to prevent being deceived with false doctrines, or unsettled in our faith; for our Saviour has told us, John 7. 17, If a man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God. Corrupt affections indulged in the heart, and evil practices allowed in the life, promote fatal errors in the mind; but purity of heart, and integrity of life, dispose men to receive the truth in the love of it. We should abstain from evil, and all appearances of evil, from sin, and that which looks like sin, leads to it, and borders upon it. He who is not shy of the appearances of sin, who shuns not the occasions of sin, and who avoids not the temptations and approaches to sin, will not long abstain from the actual commission of sin.

Ver. 23—28. The apostle prays to the very God of peace, the Author of peace, and Lover of concord. He prays on behalf of the Thessalonians for their sanctification, that God would sanctify them wholly; and for their preservation, that they might be preserved blameless. That He would sanctify them in respect of their whole nature, consisting of an immortal soul and a body with various appetites. That every sense, member, organ, and faculty, might be purified and devoted to God's service.

He prays that they might be wholly sanctified, more perfectly, for the best are sanctified but in part, while in this world; therefore, we should pray for, and press toward complete sanctification. Where the good work of grace is begun, it shall be carried on, be protected and preserved; and all who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, shall be preserved to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. And because, if God did not carry on his good work in the soul, we would miscarry, we should pray to God, to perfect his work, and preserve us free from sin and impurity, till we are presented faultless before the throne of his glory with exceeding joy.

The kindness and love of God had appeared to them in calling them to the knowledge of his truth; and the faithfulness of God was their security, that they should persevere to the end, ver. 24; therefore as the apostle was assured of the Lord's faithfulness to his promises and covenant engagements to his people,

whom he had called by his grace, so he was satisfied that his prayer for them would be granted. Thus all who are called by his grace, he will keep by the same, to complete and everlasting salvation.

He requests their prayers, ver. 25. We should pray for one another; and brethren should thus express brotherly love. Ministers need their people's prayers; and the more people pray for their ministers, the more good ministers may have from God, and the people may receive by their ministry.

The apostle sends a friendly salutation from himself, and Silvanus and Timothy, and would have them salute each other in their names, ver. 26; he would have them signify mutual love and christian affection to one another.

This epistle was to be read to all the brethren, ver. 27. It is not only allowed to the common people to read the scriptures, but it is their indispensable duty, and what they should be persuaded to do. These holy oracles should not be kept concealed in an unknown tongue, but translated, that all men being concerned to know the scriptures, they all may be able to read them. The scriptures should be read in all public congregations, for the benefit of the unlearned especially. Reading the scrip-

tures was a part of the worship of the jews in their synagogues.

He closes with the apostolical benediction, usual in other epistles, ver. 28. We need no more to make us happy, than to know that grace which our Lord Jesus Christ has manifested, and be interested in that grace which he has purchased, and partake of that grace which dwells in him as the Head of the church. This is an ever-flowing and an overflowing fountain of grace to supply all our wants.

23. *Vitringer* shows, that the jewish doctors, as well as the philosophers, considered that man was constituted of three distinct substances, the rational spirit, the animal soul, and the visible body, to which opinion, the apostle probably here refers.

26 See note, Rom 16.

27. It is probable that from the beginning of the christian dispensation, the scriptures of the Old Testament were read in every assembly for Divine worship. St. Paul, knowing the plenitude of the apostolic commission, now demands that the same respect should be paid to his writings which had been given to those of the ancient prophets. This therefore is a proper direction to be inserted in the *first* epistle written by him.—*T. H. Horne*.

— This clause is an evidence of the authenticity of the epistle. If it was read in the church of Thessalonica, during St. Paul's life time, no publication could be more authentic. If it was not read, the existence of this clause would condemn it as not authentic, and be an invincible impediment to its success.—*See Paley*.

THE SECOND EPISTLE TO THE THESSALONIANS.

THE second epistle to the Thessalonians was written soon after the first, and from the same place. It was occasioned by the information brought to Paul by the person who had been the bearer of his first letter to them. He was told that, from some expressions in it, many expected the second coming of Christ was at hand, and that the day of judgment would arrive in their time. Some of those who thought the advent of Christ, and the end of the world were near, neglected their worldly duties. As soon as this was made known to Paul, he wrote again to correct their error, which appearing to rest upon apostolical authority, was injurious to the spread of the gospel. He had written in accordance with the expressions of the prophets of the Old Testament; and he informs them there were many intermediate counsels yet to be fulfilled, before that day of the Lord shall come, though, because it is sure, he had spoken of it as near.

1. The apostle expresses his joy on account of their faith, charity, and patience under persecution, and assures them of a proper recompense at the coming of Christ, ch. 1.

2. He then corrects the mistake into which they had fallen, assuring them that the day of the Lord would not come until a great apostasy, which he characterizes as the man of sin, had overspread the christian world, the nature of which he describes. Symptoms of this had already appeared, but as yet its general progress was hindered. He urges them to steadfastness, and prays that they might be comforted and strengthened, ch. 2.

3. He requests their prayers, and expresses his confidence that they would regard the instructions he had given them. He reproves those who led an idle and disorderly life, and concludes with a blessing, ch. 3.

This epistle has one very peculiar mark of genuineness and authenticity, in the prophetic

description of the man of sin and the mystery of iniquity. Considering how directly opposed the principles here described are to the spirit of christianity, there appeared no probability that such a system as that which is here delineated, and which has been so exactly fulfilled, ever could have prevailed in the christian church. But the subject led to a truly remarkable anticipation of some of the future events which were to occur in the later ages of the christian church, and which strikingly demonstrate the prophetic spirit the apostle possessed.

CHAPTER I.

The apostle salutes the church at Thessalonica, ver. 1, 2. Blesses God for the growing state of their love and patience, 3, 4. And encourages them to persevere therein under all their sufferings for Christ, in consideration of his coming at the great day of account, to execute righteous judgment upon his and their enemies, and to be glorified in their own complete salvation, for which the apostle hoped and prayed on their behalf, 5—12.

Ver. 1—4. After a salutation, as in the former epistle, ver. 1, 2, the apostle expresses his esteem for the Thessalonians. He glorified God on their behalf, ver. 3. He chooses rather to speak of what was praiseworthy in them, in thanksgiving to God, than by commendation of them; and as what he mentions was matter of his rejoicing, he accounted it matter of thanksgiving. He esteemed them and thanked God for the increase of their faith, and love, and patience, that they were not only true christians, but growing christians. Where there is the truth of grace, there will be increase of it. The path of the just is as the shining light, which shines more and more unto the perfect day. And where there is the increase of grace, God must have all the glory of it. We are as much indebted to him for the improvement of grace, and the progress of that good work, as for the first work of grace, and the beginning of it.

The growth of their faith appeared by the works of faith; and where faith grows, all other graces grow proportionably. Their charity abounded, ver. 3. their love to God and man. Where faith grows, love will abound, for faith works by love. He glories in them before the churches of God, ver. 4. The apostle never flattered, but he took pleasure in commending and speaking well to the glory of God, and for the excitement and encouragement of others. Their patience as well as faith, increased in all their persecutions and

tribulations. Patience has its perfect work, when it extends itself to all trials. The Thessalonians endured many persecutions for the sake of righteousness, as well as other troubles in this calamitous life; yet they endured all these by faith, and with patience, not with insensibility under them, but patiently bearing them, and doing so from christian principles, which kept them quiet and submissive, and afforded them inward strength and support. Where such growth in grace, and abounding in all the exercises of mutual love are witnessed in believers, the hearts of faithful ministers will rejoice.

It argues an eminent degree of faith and patience, and such as may be proposed as a pattern for imitation to others, when a variety of trials and cross dispensations from God, and of persecutions from men, do not mar, but rather quicken the exercise of those graces; for the patience and faith of which the apostle gloried, was such as sustained them, and enabled them to endure all their persecutions and tribulations.—(79 f.)

Ver. 5—10. Having mentioned the persecutions and tribulations which the Thessalonians endured, principally for the cause of Christ, the apostle offers several things for their comfort under them. He tells them of the present happiness and advantage of their sufferings, ver. 5. Their faith, being thus tried, and patience exercised, were improved by their sufferings, inasmuch that they were counted worthy of the kingdom of God. Their sufferings were a manifest token that they were worthy or meet to be accounted christians indeed, seeing they could suffer for christianity. And the truth is, religion, if it is worth any thing, is worth every thing; and those have no religion, or none worth having, or know not how to value it, who cannot find in their hearts to suffer for it. We cannot by all our sufferings, any more than by our services,

merit heaven as a debt; but by our patience under sufferings, we are prepared for the joy promised to patient sufferers in the cause of God.

Perhaps it may further imply, that the sufferings of good men, and the triumphant prosperity of their persecuting enemies, not only will end in such a display of Divine vengeance, but that these seeming irregularities do even now declare that there shall be such a day of retribution.—(80)

There will be a punishment inflicted on persecutors, ver. 6. And nothing more infallibly marks a man for eternal ruin, than a spirit of persecution, and enmity to the name and people of God. God will render a recompense, and will trouble them that trouble his people.

There is a reward for the persecuted, ver. 7. There is a rest for the people of God; a rest from sin and sorrow. Though the troubles of the righteous may be many now, yet God will deliver them out of them all. The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed. Ministers and people shall rest together, and rejoice together, who suffer together here; the meaneſt christian shall rest with the greatest apostle. What is more, if we suffer for Christ, we shall also reign with him, 2 Tim. 2. 12.

The certainty of this future recompense is proved by the righteousness of God. It is a righteous thing with God, ver. 6, to render to every man according to his works. The thoughts of this should be terrible to wicked men and persecutors, and a support of the righteous, and such as are persecuted. This righteous recompense shall be made; when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, ver. 7. That will be the day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God. Faith, anticipating the great decisive day, is enabled by the light of revelation to read, and in a measure to understand, the book of providence, which appears confused to unbelievers; and thus it waits with composure and comfort for the coming of the Lord.

The Lord Jesus will in that day appear from heaven. Now the heavens retain him, they conceal him; but then he will be revealed and made manifest. He will come in all the pomp and power

of the upper world, from whence we look for the Saviour. He will be revealed with his mighty angels, ver. 7, or the angels of his power; these will be the ministers of his justice and mercy in that day. He will come in flaming fire, ver. 8. This will be a trying fire, to try every man's works; the saints shall share in the purity, and partake the happiness of the new heaven and the new earth; it will be a consuming fire to the wicked. His light will be piercing, and his power consuming, to all who in that day shall be found as chaff.

The effects of this appearance will be most terrible to some, for he will then take vengeance on the wicked. 1. On those that sinned against the principles of natural religion, and rebelled against the light of nature—that know not God, ver. 5, though the invisible things of him are manifested in the things that are seen. 2. On those that rebel against the light of revelation, that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men love darkness rather than light. This is the great crime of multitudes—the gospel is revealed to them, and they will not believe it; or if they pretend to believe it, they will not obey it. Believing the truths of the gospel, is in order to our obeying the precepts of the gospel; there must be the obedience of faith. To such persons as are here mentioned, by whatever name or appellation they may be distinguished, the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ will be terrible, because of their doom, which is mentioned, ver. 9.

Though sinners may be long reprieved, they will be punished at last. They did sin's work, and must receive sin's wages. Then punishment will be destruction, not of their being, but of their bliss; both as to body and soul. They shall be always dying, and yet never die. Their misery will continue to all eternity. It must needs be so, since the punishment is inflicted by an eternal God, fastening upon an immortal soul, set out of the reach of Divine mercy and grace. This destruction shall come immediately from God himself. Here God punishes sinners by creatures, by instruments; but then it will be destruction from the Almighty. It shall come from the glory of his power, or from his glorious power. Not only the justice of God,

but his almighty power, will be glorified in the destruction of sinners; and who knows the power of his anger?

It will be a joyful day to some, even to the saints, unto those who believe and ~~preach~~ the gospel. And then the apostle's testimony concerning this day, will be confirmed and believed, ver. 10. In that bright and blessed day Christ Jesus will be glorified and admired by his saints. They shall behold his glory, and admire it with pleasure; they will glorify his grace, and admire the wonders of his power and goodness toward them, and find their largest expectations far exceeded. Christ will be glorified and admired in them. His grace and power will be manifested and magnified, when it shall appear what he has purchased *for*, and wrought *in*, and bestowed *upon* all those who believe in him. He will be glorified in the riches of his love, the preciousness of his redemption, and his faithfulness to his promises, as displayed by their salvation.

The world one day shall wonder at Christ's dealings with those who believe. Now, they are a wonder to many: but how will they be wondered at in this great and glorious day! Christ will not be so much admired in the glorious esteem of angels whom he will bring from heaven with him as in the many saints, the many sons, whom he will bring to glory. No words can adequately express the adoring and adoring gratitude and love which will unite with the joy and triumph of that happy period.

Lord, if the glory put upon thy saints shall be thus admired, how much more shalt thou be admired, the bestower of that rich and transcendent glory! The glory of thy justice in the damnation of the wicked will be admired, but not comparably with the glory of thy mercy in the salvation of believers. How will this strike the adoring angels with holy admiration, and transport thy adoring saints in eternal rapture!—(73.)

Though there is much foretold in scripture, of the glory which shall be put upon the Lord's people in the last day, yet that which is revealed is so little believed, and comes so far short of that height of glory wherewith they shall be then adorned and crowned, that heaven and happiness shall far exceed all that ever entered into the heart, not only of natural men, but also of the

godly themselves. Therefore the first sight of it shall strike with admiration, as infinitely beyond their expectation and hope. The meanest believer shall enjoy more than the most enlarged heart can imagine or comprehend while we are here; Christ will be admired in all them that believe, the meanest believer not excepted.—(79.)

5. If we hold this principle of faith, that God is the just Judge of the world, and that it is his office to reward every one according to his work; this other principle must ~~be~~ ^{be} ~~also~~ ^{also} ~~dispute~~ ^{follow}, that the present disorder is proof that there will be a judgment which does not yet appear. —*Catm.* He adds, God therefore to excite us to the hope of a future judgment, now only judges a portion of the world.

9. Everlasting destruction is not annihilation, for their being continues, and as the destruction is everlasting, it is an eternal continuance, and presence of substantial evil, and absence of all good. The everlasting destruction of the ungodly is a subject that should be continually placed before men.—*A. Clarke.*

Ver 11, 12. The apostle again tells the Thessalonians of his earnest and constant prayer for them. He could not be present with them, yet they were much upon his thoughts, and he could not express his good will and good wishes in any way better than in earnest constant prayer to God for them. The believing thoughts and expectation of the second coming of Christ, should put us on prayer to God for ourselves and others. We are called with a high and holy calling; we are called to God's kingdom and glory; our great concern should be, to be worthy of it, prepared for this glory, and because we have no worth of our own, but what is owing purely to the grace of God, we should pray that he would make us worthy, and then count us worthy, of this calling, Col. 1. 12.

Also, that God would carry on the good work that is begun, and fulfil all the good pleasure of his goodness. If there is any good in us, it is owing to the good pleasure of his goodness, and therefore is called grace. There are various and manifold purposes of grace and good-will in God toward his people, and the apostle prays, that all of them may be fulfilled or accomplished toward these Thessalonians. In particular, the apostle prays, that God would complete in them the work of faith with power. The fulfilling the work of faith is in order, to the fulfilling every other good

work. And it is the power of God that not only begins, but that carries on, and perfects the work of faith.

The apostle prayed for these things, ver. 12. That the name of the Lord Jesus may be glorified; at this end we should aim in every thing we do and desire. Our good works should so shine before men, that others may glorify God, that Christ may be glorified in and by us, and then we shall be glorified in and with him. And this is the great end and design of the grace of our God and Lord Jesus Christ, which is manifested to us, and wrought in us. May we now do all in our power to promote and recommend the gospel, and to do good to others; glorifying the Lord on earth, may we be sure of being for ever glorified with him in heaven.

11. The sense seems to be, "that I would powerfully and fully accomplish all the benevolent designs of his goodness, and consummate your work of faith" -- *Bloomfield*

12. "According to the grace of Jesus Christ, our God and Lord" -- *G. Sharp*.

CHAPTER II.

The apostle cautions the Thessalonians against an erroneous notion, as though the time of Christ's coming to the final judgment were just at hand, ver. 1-2. He assures them there would first be a general apostasy from the faith, and a revealing of the anti-christian man of sin, whom he describes by his rise, reign, and ruin, and shows the just destruction that would come upon his insatuated subject, who had pleasure in unrighteousness. 3-12. He blesses God for the security of the Thessalonians from apostasy, by virtue of their eternal election, and effectual calling, and thereupon repeats his exhortation to steadfastness, and prays for them, 13-17.

Ver. 1, 2. Some among the Thessalonians had mistaken the apostle's meaning, in what he wrote in his former epistle, about the coming of Christ, by thinking that it was near at hand. The apostle is careful to prevent the spreading of this error. If errors and mistakes arise among christians, we should take the first opportunity to rectify them; and good men will be especially careful to suppress errors which may rise from mistaking their words and actions. We have a subtle adversary, who watches all opportunities to do mischief, and will sometimes promote errors, even by means of the words of scripture. Observe, he entreats them as brethren, he

shows great kindness and condescension. And this is the best way to deal with men, when we would preserve or recover them from errors. He adjures them in the most solemn manner. From the words used by the apostle, we may observe, it is most certain that the Lord Jesus Christ will come to judge the world. Whatever uncertainty we are in, or whatever mistakes may arise about the time of his coming, that coming itself is certain. This has been the faith and hope of all christians in all ages of the church; it was the faith and hope of the Old Testament saints, Jude, ver. 14.

At the second coming of Christ, all the saints will be gathered together to him. There will then be a general assemblage of all the saints, and none but saints; all the Old Testament saints, who became acquainted with Christ by the dark shadows of the law, and saw this day at a distance; and all the New Testament saints, to whom life and immortality were brought to light by the gospel. All shall be gathered together to Christ. They shall be gathered together to him, to be attendants on him, to be assessors with him, to be presented by him to the Father, to be with him for ever, and to be happy in his presence to all eternity.

The apostle cautions the Thessalonians, that they should not be deceived about the time of Christ's coming, and so be shaken in mind, or be troubled. Errors in the mind tend greatly to weaken our faith, and cause us trouble; and such as are weak in faith, and of troubled minds, are liable to be deceived, and fall a prey to seducers. He gives them warning, and would not have them soon shaken in mind, or troubled.

He would not have their faith weakened. We should firmly believe the second coming of Christ; but there was danger lest the Thessalonians, if they apprehended the coming of Christ was just at hand, upon finding that they, or others whom they too much regarded, were mistaken as to the time, should thereupon question the truth or certainty of the thing itself; but they ought not to waver in their minds, as to this great thing, which is the faith and hope of all the saints. False doctrines are like the winds that toss the water to and fro, and they are apt to unsettle the minds of men, who are as unstable as water.

He would not have their comforts lessened. It is probable that the coming of Christ was represented in so much terror, as to trouble many serious christians among them; though in itself it should be matter of the believer's hope and joy. It is sufficient for us to know that our Lord will come, and will gather all his saints unto him, and we should be equally careful to be always ready for his coming, and to guard against delusions and presumption, in respect to the exact time of that great event.

1. "Concerning the coming." Though the other sense is an unquestionable one, yet on consideration of the whole passage taken in connection with ch. I of the former epistle, it appears less suitable here. The apostle is going to speak to them on a subject concerning which they can be troubled -- *Scholerfeld*.

2. Some have thought this verse implies that epistles had been shown to the Thessalonians lately purporting to have been written by St Paul. *Poling* does not consider this to have been the case, and states the reference which he refers to the first epistle, as a considerable proof of the genuineness of both.

Ver. 3-12. Some deceivers will present new revelations, others misinterpret scripture, and others will be guilty of gross forgeries. But we must be careful that no man deceive us, ver. 3. A particular matter in which the apostle cautions them not to be deceived, is about the near approach of Christ's coming, as if it was to have been in the apostle's days, and harmless as this error might have seemed to many, yet, because it was an error, it would have proved of bad consequence to many. He gives the reason why they should not expect the coming of Christ as at hand. There would be a general apostasy, a falling away first, ver. 3, such as should be very general, though gradual, and would occasion the rise of antichrist, that man of sin. And no sooner was christianity planted and rooted in the world, than there began to be a defection in the christian church. It was so in the Old Testament church: soon after any considerable advance made in religion, there followed a defection.

Great disputes have been, who or what is intended by this man of sin and son of perdition. Observe, 1. The names of the state and power here spoken of. The man of sin, denoting egregious wickedness; not only is he addicted to, and practises wickedness, but also promotes, countenances, and commands

sin and wickedness in others; and is the son of perdition, because he is devoted to certain destruction, and is the instrument of destroying many others both in soul and body.

2. He opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God, or is worshipped; demanding greater regard to his commands than to those of God or the magistrate. As God was in the temple of old, and worshipped there, and is in and with his church now; so the antichrist here mentioned, is some usurper of God's authority in the christian church, who claims Divine honours. Of this the apostle had told them when he was with them, no doubt, that they should not take offence or be stumbled at it.

3. Something hindered or withheld until it was taken away, ver. 6, 7. This is supposed to be the power of the roman empire, which the apostle did not mention more plainly at that time; while this continued, it prevented the advances of the romish ecclesiastical power to that height of tyranny, to which soon afterward it arrived; however many of the early fathers so far understood the apostle, as to declare that antichrist would not come till after the downfall of the roman empire. This mystery of iniquity was gradually to arrive at its height; and so it was in effect, that universal corruption of doctrine and worship came in by degrees, and the ecclesiastical usurpation was gradual: and thus the mystery of iniquity the more easily, and almost insensibly, prevailed. The apostle justly calls it a mystery of iniquity, because wicked designs and actions were concealed under false shows and pretences, at least they were concealed from the common view and observation. By pretended devotion, superstition and idolatry were advanced; and by a pretended zeal for God and his glory, bigotry and persecution were promoted. This mystery of iniquity even then began; while the apostles were yet living, the enemy came, and sowed tares; there were persons who pretended zeal for Christ, but really opposed him.

4. The fall or ruin of the antichristian state is declared, ver. 8. The head of this antichristian kingdom is called that wicked one, or that lawless person who sets up human power in competition

with, and in contradiction to the Divine dominion and power of the Lord Jesus Christ. The apostle assures the Thessalonians that the Lord would consume and destroy him, and that according to the predictions of his word, and by the preaching of his gospel, by the Spirit of his mouth. The pure word of God, accompanied with the Spirit of God, will discover this mystery of iniquity, and make the power of antichrist to consume and waste away; in due time it shall be totally and finally destroyed, and this will be by the brightness of Christ's coming. The coming of Christ to destroy the wicked, will be with peculiar glory and eminent lustre and brightness.

5. The apostle further describes the reign and rule of this man of sin. The manner of his coming or ruling, and working; it is after the example of Satan. He is the enemy of the truth as it is in Jesus, and all the faithful followers of Jesus. More particularly, it is with satanical power and deceit. A Divine power is pretended for the support of this kingdom, but it is only after the working of Satan. Signs and wonders, visions and miracles, are pretended; but they have false signs to support false doctrines; and lying wonders, or only pretended miracles, things false in act, and fraudulently managed, to impose upon the people; and the diabolical deceptions with which the antichristian state has been supported are notorious. The apostle calls it all deceivableness of unrighteousness, ver. 10. Others may call these things pious frauds, but the apostle called them unrighteous and wicked frauds; and, indeed, all fraud is an impious thing. Many are the subtle artifices the man of sin has used, and various are the plausible pretences by which he has beguiled unwary and unstable souls, to embrace false doctrines, and submit to his usurped dominion.

The persons are described, who are his willing subjects, or most likely to become such, ver. 10. They love not the truth, that they may be saved. They heard the truth, it may be, but they did not love it. They had some notional knowledge of what was true, but they became a prey to seducers. Had they loved the truth, they would have persevered in it, and been preserved by it. Of these persons it is said, that they pe-

rish, or are lost; they are in a lost condition, and in danger to be lost for ever. For the sin and ruin of antichrist's kingdom is fully declared, ver. 11, 12. Their sin is this; They believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness. They did not love the truth, and therefore they did not believe it; and because they did not believe the truth, therefore they had pleasure in unrighteousness, or in wicked actions, and were pleased with false notions. An erroneous mind and vicious life often help one another forward.

Their ruin is thus expressed; God shall send them strong delusions to believe a lie. Not that God is the author of sin, but he gives them over to Satan, or leaves them to be deluded by his instruments; he gives them up to their own hearts' lusts, and leaves them to themselves, and then sin will follow of course. God is just when he inflicts spiritual judgments here, and eternal punishments hereafter, upon those who have no love to the truths of the gospel, who will not believe them, or live suitably to them, but indulge false doctrines in their minds, and wicked practices in their lives and conversations.

These prophecies have now in a great measure received their completion, and confirm our assured belief of the truth of the scriptures; but though the son of perdition has been revealed, though he has opposed and exalted himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; and has spoken and acted as if he were a god upon earth, and has proclaimed his arrogance, and supported his delusions, by lying miracles, and all kinds of impostures, yet the Lord has not yet fully destroyed him with the brightness of his coming, and other prophecies remain to be fulfilled before the end shall come. There have been many antichrists, but none so mischievous as he who seated himself in the temple of God. Yet, after all the mysterious devices of iniquity which Satan or wicked men can frame, the counsel of God shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure, and one antichristian power has often been over-ruled to stop the progress of another.

It will at last appear that none were deceived by any "energy of delusion" who were not at heart enemies to the truth and will of God, and disposed to

take pleasure in unrighteousness. And if we now hate sin and love the truth, we are bound to thank God for ourselves and for each other. Many can well remember the time when they hated the doctrines of God's word, and preferred soothing errors. Some seemed to have provoked God to send strong delusions to believe a lie, and we should have held it fast had we been left to ourselves.

2. "Here comes justly to be blamed the curiosity or boldness of such as have in this point presumed to have an eye where the Lord hath no tongue, to inquire into this secret, and presumptuously to determine the time of Christ's second coming, and of the end of the world. All ages have been troubled with such, diverting men's minds from preparation to meet the Lord, to vain speculations of things unrevealed and therefore unprofitable. Within our own remembrance some have busied themselves much in that question, and determined too presumptuously of the time of consummation. Not contented with things revealed and necessary, they must needs search into God's secrets. — Holby spake he that said on this point, 'I am willingly ignorant of what God would not have me know.' There is a holy ignorance becoming God's children, in things that he has pleased to keep secret unto himself. As holy may we be ignorant of what is concealed, as we can comfortably know what God has revealed. Hereof mark, since the apostle teaches, it is among the secrets that belong to God.

"Let us leaving these idle and curious inquiries, take notice of the duty which concerns us, in respect of the unknownness and suddenness of Christ's coming, as our Saviour commands it unto us. 'To watch continually, because in an hour we think not, the Lord shall come; that we should stand in continual expectation of it, think of every day as if it were the last day of the world, wherein Christ shall come to judgment.' — *Scholer*, 1627.

3-12. Nothing can more exactly coincide with the system of popery, as it prevailed in the roman church, and under the roman pontiffs, than this passage does — *T. Scott*. This description has been considered very fully by *Bp. Newton*, whose conclusion is, "that the man of sin is the pope, not meaning this or that pope in particular, but the pope in general, as the chief head and supporter of this apostasy." *Faber* refers to the very able manner in which *Bp. Newton* has discussed the subject, and urges that the impediment mentioned, ver. 7, was the "coercing power of the roman empire," which was completely withdrawn at the commencement of the 1260 years, though the empire itself remains till the end of that period. He adds, Both protestants and papists agree with the early fathers that the man of sin must be identified with the little horn of Daniel's fourth wild-beast, and with the two-horned beast and harlot of the apocalypse, however they may differ in their application of their character.

5. *Paley* shows that this reference to a con-
 22 vention which the apostle had held with the Thessalonians, but the purport of which is not here explained, is a strong proof of the authenticity of the epistle.

11. The lie. — *Schulefeld*.

Ver. 13-15. When we hear of the apostasy of many, it is matter of great comfort and joy that there is a remnant according to the election of grace, which does and shall persevere; and especially we should rejoice, if we have reason to hope that we are of that number. The apostle had often given thanks on behalf of the Thessalonians, and he still abounds in thanksgiving for them; and there was good reason, because they were beloved by the Lord, as appeared in their security from apostatizing. This preservation of the saints is because God had chosen them from the beginning. He had loved them with an everlasting love. It is from the beginning; not the beginning of the gospel, but the beginning of the world, Eph. 1. 4. The end to which they were chosen is salvation, complete and eternal salvation from sin and misery, and the full enjoyment of all good. The means in order to obtaining this end are sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth. The end and the means must not be separated. We are not elected of God, because we were holy, but that we might be holy. If we are chosen to salvation as the end, we must be prepared for it by sanctification; which is by the operation of the Holy Spirit as the Author, and by faith on our part. Faith and holiness must be joined together, as well as holiness and happiness. Let none conclude themselves chosen and called, who are strangers to the sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience, and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus.

As they were chosen to salvation, so they were called thereunto by the gospel, ver. 14, Rom. 8. 30. The outward call of God is by the gospel; and this is rendered effectual by the inward operation of the Spirit. Wherever the gospel comes, it is a call to honour and happiness, even the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glory he has purchased, and the glory he possesses, to be communicated unto those who believe in him and obey his gospel. Such shall be with Christ, to behold his glory, and they shall be glorified with Christ, and partake of his glory. The belief of the truth brings the sinner to rely on Christ, and so to love and obey him; it is sealed by the Holy Spirit upon his heart, and prepares him for the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ in heaven.

Therefore, brethren, stand fast, ver. 15. God's grace in our election and calling is so far from doing away our diligent care and endeavour, that it should quicken and engage us to the greatest resolution and diligence. The Thessalonians are exhorted to steadfastness in their christian profession, or to hold fast the traditions which they had been taught, the doctrine of the gospel, which had been delivered by the apostle, by word or epistle. As yet the canon of scripture was not complete, therefore some things were delivered by the apostles, in their preaching, under the guidance of the infallible Spirit, which christians were bound to observe as coming from God; other things were afterwards committed to writing by them, as the apostle had written a former epistle to these Thessalonians; and these epistles were written, as the writers were moved by the Holy Ghost. There is no argument from hence for regarding oral traditions in our days, now the canon of scripture is complete, as of equal authority with the sacred writings. Such doctrines and duties as were taught by the inspired apostles, we must stedfastly adhere to; but we have no certain evidence of any thing delivered by them, more than what we find contained in the holy scriptures. Let us then stand fast in the doctrines of the apostles, and reject all additions from every quarter.

Ver. 16, 17. The apostle earnestly prays—to our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father. We may and should direct our prayers, not only to God the Father, through the mediation of our Lord Jesus Christ, but also to our Lord Jesus Christ himself; and should pray in his name unto God, not only as his Father, but as our Father in and through him.

He takes encouragement in his prayer—from the consideration of what God had already done for him and them; Who hath loved us, and given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, ver. 16. The love of God is the spring and fountain of all the good we have or hope for; our election calling, justification, and salvation, are all owing to the love of God in Christ Jesus. From this fountain all our consolation flows. And the consolation

of saints is an everlasting consolation. The comforts of the saints shall not die with them; none shall deprive them of the spiritual consolations God gives; and God will not take them away, because he loves them with an everlasting love. Their consolation is founded on the hope of eternal life. There is good reason for strong consolations, because the saints have good hope. Their hope is grounded on the love of God, the promise of God, and the experience they have had of the power, the goodness, and the faithfulness of God; and it is a good hope through grace. The free grace and mercy of God are what they hope for, and what their hopes are founded on, not any worth or merit of their own.

He asks of God for them—that he would comfort their hearts, and establish them in every good word and work, ver. 17. There was good hope, through grace, that they should be preserved, and he prays that they might be established. Comfort and establishment are here joined together. Comfort is a means of establishing us to the more pleasure we take in the word, and work, and ways of God, the more likely we shall be to persevere therein. And establishment in the ways of God is a likely means in order to comfort; but, if we are wavering in faith, and of a doubtful mind, or halting and faltering in our duty, no wonder if we are strangers to the pleasures and joys of religion. We must be established in the word of truth and the work of righteousness: Christ must be honoured by good works and good words; and in so doing believers may hope for comfort and establishment, till at length their holiness and happiness are fully completed.

Then we may, even in the most afflicted circumstances, look with compassion on the mightiest of those who have only the perishing hopes and consolations of this vain world; or who have only the empty confidence which exists with contempt, neglect, or abuse of God our Saviour.

CHAPTER III.

The apostle desires prayers for himself and his fellow-labourers; expresses confidence in the Thessalonians, and prays for them, ver. 1—5. Charges them to withdraw

from disorderly walkers, particularly from those who were lazy and busy-bodies, contrary to his example and command, 6—15. And concludes with a prayer for them, and with a salutation and benediction, 16—18.

Ver. 1—5. The apostle desires the prayers of his friends. The communion of saints is kept up, not only by their praying together, or with one another, but by their praying for one another, when absent. And thus those who are at a great distance, may meet together at the throne of grace; and those who are not capable of doing or receiving any other kindness, may yet thus way do and receive real and very great kindness. It is the duty of people to pray for ministers, and ministers need the prayers of their people. They are directed to pray for the success of the gospel ministry: that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, ver. 1. This was the great thing that holy Paul was most solicitous about; that the word of the Lord Jesus, concerning his salvation, might be diffused through divers nations, and its excellent nature and effects be manifested.

Also for the safety of gospel ministers, ver. 2. Those who are enemies to the preaching of the gospel, and persecutors of its faithful preachers, are unreasonable and wicked men. There is need to pray for the protection, as well as the assistance of godly and faithful ministers. Notwithstanding the abundance of miracles, and the fulfilment of prophecies, which evinced the truth of the gospel, yet all men had not faith to believe it; that being the effect of Divine power upon the heart, overcoming the obstinacy and enmity of fallen nature. Many do not believe the gospel: and no wonder if such are restless and malicious in their endeavours to oppose it; and many have not even common kindness or honesty; no confidence can be safely put in them. We may be in more danger from false and pretended friends, than from open and avowed enemies. They are encouraged to trust in God, that he would establish them. This the apostle had prayed for on their behalf, and now he encourages them to expect this favour; we stand no longer than God holds us up. That God will keep them from evil; we have as much need of the grace of God for our perseverance to

the end, as for the beginning of the good work. The evil of sin is the greatest evil, but there are also other evils we need to be preserved from, and we have encouragement to depend upon the grace of God; The Lord is faithful. When once the promise is made, the performance is sure and certain. He is a faithful God, and a faithful Friend; we may depend on his filling up all the relations he stands in to his people.

The apostle had confidence in them, but that was founded upon his confidence in God; for there is otherwise no confidence in man, ver. 4. Their obedience is described by doing what he and his fellow-labourers had directed; which were the commandments of the Lord: for the apostles had no further commission than to teach men to observe and to do what the Lord had commanded, Matt. 28. 20.

He makes a prayer for them, ver. 5, for spiritual blessings. 1. That their hearts might be brought into the love of God. We never can attain to this, unless God by his grace direct our hearts aright, for our love is apt to go after other things. But we sustain much damage by misplacing our affections. It is our sin and our misery that we place our affections upon wrong objects. If God direct our love aright upon himself, the rest of the affections will be rectified. 2. That a patient waiting for Christ might be joined with this love of God. There is no true love of God without faith in Jesus Christ; we must wait for Christ, which supposes our faith in him, that we believe he came once in flesh, and will come again in glory; and we must expect this second coming of Christ, and be careful to get ready for it. There must be a patient waiting, enduring with courage and constancy all we may meet with in the mean time; and we have need of patience and of Divine grace, to exercise christian patience, the patience of Christ, as some read the word, patience for Christ's sake and after Christ's example, even a resignation of soul under sufferings, meekness and endurance under injuries, patient continuance in well-doing, and calm believing and waiting the Lord's time of deliverance.

If by the special grace of God we have that faith which multitudes have not, our obligations are infinite, and we

should earnestly pray that we may be inclined and enabled, perseveringly and without reserve, to obey his commands, and that the Lord the Spirit may direct our hearts into the love of God, and the patience of Christ.

Ver. 6—15. The apostle directs those who were faulty, and corrects some things amiss among them. The best society of christians may have faulty persons among them, and some things that ought to be reformed. Some of the brethren did not govern themselves agreeably to their profession of religion, ver. 6; not according to the precepts delivered by the apostle. It is required of those who have received the gospel, that they live according to the gospel. If they do not, they are to be counted disorderly persons. They well knew in what respects they ought to imitate the apostle and his brethren. They had not lived in idleness, or at the expense of others, but wrought with much labour and fatigue for their own maintenance. They had power to require what was needful, but deemed it necessary to give such an example. Such as could work and would not, were not to be maintained in idleness, ver. 10. Christianity is not to countenance such injustice as is the effect of slothfulness, which would consume what is intended to encourage the industrious, and to support the sick and afflicted. Industry in our particular callings as men, is a duty required of us by our general calling as christians. But some expected to be maintained in idleness, and indulged a curious and conceited temper. They intermeddled with the concerns of others, and did much injury, pretending to advise and determine concerning the proper management of both public and private affairs, while their own affairs were neglected. It is probable that these persons had a notion, by misunderstanding some passages in the former epistle, concerning the near approach of the coming of Christ, which served for a pretence to leave off the work of their callings, and to live in idleness. It is a great error, or abuse of religion, to make it a cloak for idleness, or any other sin. If we were sure that the day of judgment were ever so near, we should, notwithstanding, do the work of the day in its day, that

when our Lord comes, he may find us so doing. The servant who waits for the coming of his Lord aright, must be working as his Lord has commanded. Most commonly those who have no business of their own, or who neglect that, busy themselves in other men's matters. If we are idle, the devil and a corrupt heart will soon find us somewhat to do. The mind of man is a busy thing; if it be not employed in doing good, it will be in doing evil.

These persons were commanded and charged in the name of Christ, and as they would stand accepted before his tribunal, to cease from this busy, idle, conduct; to be industrious, that they might live by their own callings. Men ought some way or other to earn their own living, otherwise they do not eat their own bread. Observe, There must be work or labour, in opposition to idleness; and there must be quietness, in opposition to being busy-bodies in other men's matters. We must study to be quiet, and to do our own business. This is an excellent but rare union, to be of an active yet quiet spirit; active in our own business, and yet quiet as to other people's. Still the body of christians were not to grow weary of any kind of well-doing, though some might make a perverse use of this direction. If any one refused to labour with quietness, they were to note him with some censure, and separate from his company, yet they were to seek his good by loving admonitions, considering him as a brother, though overtaken in a fault. Go on and prosper. The Lord is with you while you are with him. See that you persevere in whatever you do, that is good. Hold on your way, and hold out to the end. You must never give over, or tire in your work. It will be time enough to rest when you come to heaven, that everlasting rest which remains for the people of God.

This declaration is confirmed by the apostle's statement, Phil 4. 15, that he had not received any thing from any church of Macedonia except that of Philippi.

15 The end of excommunication is, not to drive from the church such as have fallen, but to win them to the church by amendment.—*Bishop's Bible.*

Ver. 16—18. We have here the apostle's benediction and prayers for these Thessalonians. Let us desire the same for ourselves and our friends.

1. That God would give them peace. Peace with God; peace in their own minds and consciences; peace among themselves, and peace with all men. This peace is desired for them always, or in every thing. Peace by all means; in every way; that, as they enjoyed the means of grace, they might use all methods to secure peace; for this is often difficult, though always desirable. If we have any peace that is desirable, God must give it, who is the author of peace and lover of concord. We shall neither have peaceable dispositions ourselves, nor find men disposed to be at peace with us, unless the God of peace give us both.

2. That the presence of God might be with them: The Lord be with you

We need nothing more to make us safe and happy, nor can we desire anything better for ourselves and our friends, than to have God's gracious presence with us and them. This will be a guide and guard in every way we may go, and our comfort in every con-

dition we may be in. The presence of God makes heaven to be heaven, and will make this earth like heaven. No matter where we are, if God be with us; nor who is absent, if God be present.

3. That the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ might be with them. It is through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that we may hope to have peace with God, and to enjoy the presence of God, for he has made those nigh who were afar off. This grace is all in all to make us happy. This the apostle admired and magnified on all occasions, he delighted and trusted in it; and this salutation or benediction was written with his own hand, as the token of every epistle, when the rest was written by another hand.

Learn hence that there is an inexhaustible fountain of rich grace in Christ, and so copious are the streams of spiritual blessings which flow from it, that if we wish ever so much to others, there still remains enough for ourselves.—(73.)

THE FIRST EPISTLE TO TIMOTHY.

TIMOTHY was a native of Lystra, a city in Asia Minor, visited by Paul, as related, Acts 14. His father was a greek, Acts 16. 1 but his mother Eunice was a jewess, and a woman of piety as well as his grandmother Lois. St Paul mentions the care they took to instruct him from childhood in the scriptures. Timothy was early remarked for his holy conduct and ministerial abilities, so that on the apostle's second visit to Lystra, Acts 16, he was selected to accompany him in his travels, though at that time very young. We find frequent mention made of Timothy as attending Paul in his journeys, assisting in preaching the gospel, and conveying communications to the different churches. In Acts 20, we find him accompanying St Paul into Asia, and from 1 Tim 1 3, 4, he appears to have been left at Ephesus to instruct the church. From that period we have no particulars concerning Timothy, but what are supplied by the traditionary accounts of early ecclesiastical history. This speaks of him as the first bishop of the church of the Ephesians, and relates that he was martyred by stones and clubs, A. D. 97, while preaching near the temple of Diana.

Considerable difference of opinion exists as to the period at which this epistle was written. T. H. Hoine gives a view of the arguments on the subject, and concludes it was penned about A. D. 61. Both the epistles to Timothy are cited by the earliest ecclesiastical writers, as undisputedly the productions of St Paul, and this is confirmed by the internal evidence.

The design of this first epistle appears to be, that Timothy having been left at Ephesus, St Paul wrote to instruct him in the choice of proper officers in the church, as well as in the exercise of a regular ministry. Also to caution against the influence of false teachers, who by subtle distinctions and endless controversies, corrupted the purity and simplicity of the gospel. He presses upon him a constant regard to the interests of practical religion, and animates him to the greatest diligence, faithfulness, and zeal, in the discharge of his office. These subjects occupy the first four chapters: the fifth chapter, with ch. 6. 1, 2, contains instructions to Timothy respecting particular classes; and in ch. 6 3—19, controversies and disputes are condemned, the love of money censured, and the rich exhorted to good works. Macknight observes, that although the errors which gave rise to these epistles have disappeared, yet they are of great use as showing the evil principles from whence these errors proceeded. They also exhibit the duties of the ministerial function, and are applicable to the christian clergy of all communions, to the end of the world. Also, as private epistles to one with whom the apostle was most intimate, they are exceedingly important, since they show what were his views and expectations as a minister of Christ, thus giving the strongest proofs of his sincerity and faithfulness.

CHAPTER I.

The apostle asserts his office, as being of Divine authority; salutes Timothy, and reminds him of the charge given him at Ephesus, ver. 1-4. Of his object therein, and of the design of the Mosaic law, 5-11. Of his own conversion and call to the apostleship, 12-17. And of Timothy's obligation to maintain faith and a good conscience, which Hymeneus and Philetus had put away from them, 18-20.

Ver. 1-4. All the apostle's hope of salvation and eternal happiness, was fixed upon the person and atonement of Christ. Jesus, Christ is a christian's hope; our hope is in him, all our hope of eternal life is built upon him; Christ is in us the hope of glory, Col. 1. 27. He addressed Timothy as his own, or true son in the faith. He seems to have been the instrument of Timothy's conversion; he had, as it were, educated him in the gospel, and Timothy revered, and served with him in his ministry, as a dutiful son with a loving father. The benediction is grace, mercy, and peace, from God our Father; and if Timothy, so eminent a minister, must be indebted to the mercy of God, and needed the increase and continuance of it, how much more do we, in these times, who have so little of his excellent spirit!

Paul tells Timothy what was the end of his appointing him to this office. Though he might assume an authority to command him, yet for love's sake he chose rather to beseech him. His business was, to take care to confirm both the ministers and the people of that church. Charge them that they teach no other doctrine than what they have received, but that they preach it pure and uncorrupt. He must prevent their regarding fables and endless genealogies and strifes of words. That which minister questions, is not for edifying; that which gives occasion for doubtful disputes, pulls down the church rather than builds it up. Godly edifying is the end at which ministers should aim in all their discourses, that christians may improve in godliness, and grow up to a greater likeness to the blessed God. Godly edifying must be in faith. Godliness of heart and life can only be maintained and increased by the exercise of faith in the truths and promises of God, through Jesus Christ.

3 The epistle probably having been written after the apostle's first imprisonment, this verse implies that Paul visited Ephesus, after the solemn leave he took of the elders of the Ephesian church, Acts 20. 25. *Paley* shows that what is there expressed, may be reconciled with a subsequent visit to that city, and that from the epistles to the Philippians and to Philemon, it is probable he meant to proceed in the direction of Ephesus when liberated from Rome.

4. Jewish fables. To what monstrous absurdities these fables were carried by the rabbis, few are entirely ignorant, though few are so unhappy as fully to know.—*Doddridge*. *Gill* shows that the Jewish genealogies gave great opportunity for management and endless disputes. *Shuttleworth* adopts *Hammond's* view, that the allusion is to the mystical speculations of the gnostics, respecting the successive emanations from the Divine essence, and the generation of the various Æons, as much more dangerous speculations. See the general note, On the gnostics.

Ver. 5-11. Here the apostle shows the use of the law, and the glory of the gospel. 1. The end of the commandment is charity, or love, Rom. 13. 8; whatever tends to weaken either our love to God, or our love to the brethren, tends to defeat the end of the commandment. Those, therefore, who boasted of their knowledge of the law, but used it only as a colour for dividing the church, and distracting it, defeated the end of the commandment. This love was to spring from a pure heart. The affections of the soul being cleansed by renewing grace, from the love and pollution of sin, and from carnal enmity and selfishness. And it was to proceed from a good conscience, well-informed concerning the will of God, and cleansed from guilt by the blood of Christ. Also from unfeigned faith, a sincere belief of the truths of God's word, and reliance on Christ. The design of the gospel is not answered by our speculating about it, and solving abstract questions, or giving heed to disputations, but when sinners, through repentance towards God, and faith in Jesus Christ, are brought to the habitual exercise of holy love. All doctrines, ordinances, and forms are useful so far as they produce this effect in our hearts and lives; and all that faith is dead which does not influence men in a practical manner. Some who set up for teachers of the law, swerved from the very end of the commandment; they set up for disputers, but their disputes proved vain jangling; set up for teachers, but they pretended to teach others what they

themselves did not understand. They declaimed in a loose confused manner upon general topics, not understanding the spiritual nature and uses of the moral law, which they pretended to explain; nor the typical import of the abrogated ceremonial institutions which they so diligently enforced.

The law was good in itself, or for its intended purposes, provided it was used according to its real import, and the design of the great Lawgiver, ver. 8. But to enforce the whole mosaic law on christians, or to teach them to depend on their own obedience to any part of it for justification, was contrary to the meaning of the law, and the intention of the Lawgiver.

And as believers were righteous persons in God's appointed way, the law was not against them. The law was not made against the righteous, ver. 9. Its condemning rigour did not refer to the case of real believers, who derive benefit from the holy law. In this sense it is directed to the lawless and disobedient, which relates to those who in their conduct manifest disregard and contempt of God. Also to ungodly and sinners—those who neglect their duties to God and to their neighbours, and to the unholo and profane—the grossly sensual and impious. The apostle then enumerates particular examples of the most atrocious nature, ver. 10. Indeed we have all deserved this condemnation: there is not one righteous except as made so by faith in Christ and through his grace. Few in comparison have been guilty of these gross acts, yet the same corrupt nature is in us all. A variety of evil actions, thoughts, affections, and words, and many other things contrary to sound doctrine, expose us to the wrath of God, and would justify him in our final condemnation. Every unrepentant sinner, every man who allows himself in the practice of any known transgression, remains under the curse of the law.

This accords with the gospel of the glory of God, by which he displays his glories, saving believers from their sins, as well as from wrath, ver. 11. Being the blessed God, the perfection and source of happiness as well as of holiness, he devised to render fallen men partakers of his happiness, by renewing them to partake his holiness. This was the gospel which had been intrusted to the

apostle. Unless, therefore, we are made righteous by faith in Christ, really repenting and forsaking sin, we are yet under the curse of the law, even according to the gospel of the blessed God, and are unfit to share the holy happiness of heaven.

10. *Horsley* shows that the word rendered "men stealers," means "a person who deals in men," literally a "slave trader." He maintains that this text condemns and prohibits the slave trade in all its modes. It ranks the slave trade next after parricide and homicide. *Bloomfield* says that all the crimes here mentioned are of the worst kind, and this seems as put for robbery of the worst sort. Let, then, the slave traders of our times tremble, for all who any way participate in this abominable traffic, uphold a system which perpetually engenders man-stealing.

Ver. 12—17. The consideration that the glorious gospel of the blessed God should be intrusted to him, excited humble, admiring gratitude in the apostle, ver. 12. He thankfully adored the Lord Jesus for this mercy, in calling him to the sacred ministry, and owning him to be an apostle. This was astonishing grace, seeing that he had been a blasphemer and persecutor, but he had obtained mercy, whereas if his malice had been exerted against the full convictions of his own conscience, he would have been given up to final impenitence. His ignorance and unbelief, indeed, were the result of concerted prejudice against the truth, but there were others who were actuated by malice directly to oppose the dictates of their consciences. He not only supposes that he should justly have perished if the Lord had been extreme to mark what was amiss, but also if his grace and mercy had not been exceedingly abundant in quickening him when dead in sin, and so working faith and love to Christ in his heart.

This conversion therefore illustrated the exceeding riches of mercy which are in Christ Jesus. It is a true and faithful saying, recommended to all, to accept and believe, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners. This is a very great truth, it is a faithful saying; these are true and faithful words, which may be depended on, That the Son of God came into the world, willingly and purposely to save sinners. The Word, that was God, the Creator, the Lord of all creatures, became flesh, that he might be the second Adam, the Surety of the

new covenant, to fulfil all righteousness, and make a full atonement for sin. The end and design of this was entirely the salvation of sinners of every nation and description, from condemnation, sin, Satan, the world and death, even all that applied in faith for this salvation. Of these sinners Paul deemed himself the chief, the greatest enemy of Christ, the most deserving of Divine vengeance of all who ever were, or would be saved by him. Instead of imagining there was any merit in his blind and obstinate sincerity, he considered himself as selected, that in him, as the chief sinner, Christ might exhibit how he can bear with and pardon his worst enemies. Thus it would stand upon record, for the encouragement of all, in every age and nation, who believe in Christ, and rely on his merits and grace for the pardon of their sins and the gift of eternal life. No man, with Paul's example before him, can reasonably question the love and power of Christ to save him, whatever his sins have been, if he really desires to trust in him as the incarnate and co-equal Son of God,* who once died on the cross, and now reigns upon the throne of glory, to save all that come to God through him.

Let us then seek for this salvation; and in humble consciousness of our unworthiness, let us admire and praise the grace of God our Saviour; and ascribe to the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, three Persons in the unity of the Godhead, as the King eternal, the universal invisible Sovereign, the Source of all wisdom, the glory of all done in, by, and for us; and let us earnestly desire that he may be honoured in all his perfections and wonderful works for ever.

15, 16 *Paley* remarks upon this passage being a just and solemn reflection, springing from the peculiar circumstances of St. Paul's conversion, as narrated in the Acts.

17. The true construction is, To the eternal King, the immortal, invisible, only wise God. See *Middleton*.

Ver. 18—20. The gospel is a charge committed to ministers, to be applied according to the design of its great Author. There had been anticipations concerning Timothy, that he would prove eminent in the work of the ministry; this encouraged Paul to commit this charge to him. Observe, the ministry is a warfare against sin and Satan: and under the Lord Jesus, who is the Captain of our

salvation. Heb. 2. 10. In his cause, and against his enemies, ministers are in particular engaged. They must execute their office diligently and courageously, notwithstanding oppositions and discouragements. The expectations concerning Timothy are here mentioned, to stir him up to the vigorous and conscientious discharge of his duty; so the good hopes others have entertained concerning us, should excite us to our duty.

Holding faith and a good conscience. We must hold both faith and a good conscience; those that put away a good conscience, will soon make shipwreck of faith. Let us live up to the directions of a renewed, enlightened conscience, and keep a conscience void of offence, being conscientious in our conduct in all things.

The apostle specifies two who had professed the christian religion, but had quitted that profession; he declared them to belong to the kingdom of Satan, that they might learn not to contradict or revile the doctrine of Christ, and the good ways of the Lord. The design of the highest censures in the primitive church, was, to prevent further sin, and to reclaim the sinner.

Those who love the service and work of Satan are justly delivered over to the power of Satan. Those who have put away a good conscience, and made shipwreck of faith, will not stick at any thing, blasphemy not excepted. Therefore let us hold faith and a good conscience, if we would keep clear of blasphemy; for if we once let these go, we do not know where we shall stop. May all who are tempted to put away a good conscience, and to abuse the gospel, remember that this is the way to make shipwreck of faith also.

Mark, it was none of Satan's desire, but the apostle's, that they might learn not to blaspheme.—(73)

CHAPTER II.

The apostle desires prayers to be made every where, for all sorts of persons, heathens and their magistrates, as well as others, since the grace of the gospel makes no difference of ranks or nations, ver. 1—8. And shows how women ought to behave in civil and religious life, 9—15.

Ver. 1—8. Here is a charge to christians, to pray for all men, and particu-

larly for all those who are in authority. Timothy must take care this is done. They should make supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks; supplications, for the averting of evil; prayers, for the obtaining of good; intercessions for others; and thanksgivings for mercies already received. The disciples of Christ must be praying people. Not only in behalf of ourselves, and all fellow-Christians, but for all, without distinction of nation, sect, or party. It is for the public good that there should be civil government, and persons intrusted with the administration of it, for whom therefore we ought to pray. For kings; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life. Not that we may get preferment, and be in honour and power under them; the height of the ambition of a real Christian, as to worldly affairs, is, to lead a quiet and peaceable life, to get through the world unmolested in a private station. But we cannot expect to be kept quiet and peaceable, unless we keep in all godliness and honesty. Here we have our duty as Christians summed up in two words; godliness, that is, the right worshipping of God; and honesty, that is, a good conduct toward all men. These two must go together; we are not truly honest, if we are not godly, and do not render to God his due; and we are not truly godly, if not honest; God hates robbery for burnt-offering.

This is good in the sight of God our Saviour, ver. 3. What is acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour, we should do, and should abound in. As a reason why we should, in our prayers, concern ourselves for all men, God's love to mankind in general, is shown, ver. 4. There is one God, ver. 5, and one only, there is no other, there can be no other, for there can be but one infinite Being. This God desires not the death and destruction of any, Ezek. 31. 11, but the welfare and salvation of all. Not that all men will be saved; but none perish unless by their own fault, Matt. 23. 37. He will have all to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth; to be saved in the way that he has appointed, and not otherwise. It concerns us to get the knowledge of the truth, because that is the way to be saved; Christ is the Way and the Truth, and so he is the Life.

There is one Mediator, and that Me-

diator gave himself a ransom for all; which implies that there is only one Mediator, and excludes the worship of all other intercessors. Jesus Christ is truly man; and, though the efficacy of his mediation is derived from the union of the Divine nature with the human, in his mysterious Person, yet that mediation between God and man, is made by his human nature; in which alone he was capable of obeying, suffering, and dying, as their righteousness; and propitiatory sacrifice, in order to his resurrection, ascension, and intercession, as their High Priest and Advocate with the Father. He paid a price sufficient for the salvation of all mankind; he brought mankind to stand upon new terms with God, so that they are not now under the law as a covenant of works, but as a rule of life: they are under grace; not under the covenant of innocence, but under a new covenant; he gave himself a ransom. The death of Christ was a ransom, a counter-price. We deserved to have died; Christ died for us, to save us from death and hell; he gave himself a ransom voluntarily, a ransom for all; so that all mankind are put in a better condition than that of devils, and rebel angels. This provision and appointment has been made and revealed, for the common benefit of the human race, both Jews and Gentiles of every nation; that all who are willing may come in this way, to the mercy-seat of a pardoning God, to seek reconciliation with him.

A mediator supposes a controversy. Sin had made a quarrel between us and God; Jesus Christ is the Mediator who undertakes to make peace, to bring God and man together. He is a ransom that was to be testified in due time. In the Old Testament times, his sufferings and the glory that should follow, were spoken of as things to be revealed in the last times, 1 Pet. 1. 10, 11. And they are accordingly revealed, Paul himself having been ordained a preacher and an apostle, to publish to the Gentiles the glad tidings of redemption and salvation by Jesus Christ, ver. 7. He was appointed particularly to preach to the Gentiles. Those who are saved must come to the knowledge of the truth, for that is God's appointed way to save sinners; if we do not know the truth, we cannot be ruled by it. St. Paul

was ordained a minister, to declare this to the gentiles, that Christ is the one Mediator between God and men, who gave himself a ransom for all. This is the substance of what all ministers are to preach, to the end of the world.

Under the gospel, prayer is not to be confined to any one particular house of prayer, ver. 8, but men must pray every where: no place is amiss for prayer, John 4. 21. Pray every where. We must pray in our closets, pray in our families, pray at our meals, pray when we are on journeys, and pray in the solemn assemblies, whether more public or private. Surely we should desire that men should pray every where to God, the Father, through our Lord Jesus Christ, and by the Holy Spirit. It is the will of God, that in prayer we should lift up hands, pure from the pollution of sin, washed in the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness. We must pray in charity: without wrath, or malice, or anger at any person. We must pray in faith, without doubting, Jam. 1 6, or, without disputing. As we learn thus to worship in spirit and in truth, we shall find our minds freed from narrow prejudices and resentment, and we shall more fervently pray to our heavenly Father, and with more understanding also.

4. As all men do not "come to the knowledge of the truth," which God wills in the same sense as "that all men should be saved," so the difficulty, if there be any, presses equally on those who adopt the opposite extreme in their views of the question, and even on such as would deduce universal actual salvation, from this text and a few similar; for they cannot say "that all men," without exception, actually do "come to the knowledge of the truth." If the clause therefore be explained to mean anything more than the willingness of God to save all, of every description, who truly believe; and his command, that we should preach to all men, and pray for all men, without distinction, it must follow, that he wills, or purposes, what he does not effect.—*T. Scott.* See also *Doddridge*.

5. One God, in this passage, does not denote the Person of the Father exclusively, but the Deity; the manhood therefore of Christ intervenes between a just and holy God and us sinners; but this manhood is essentially and inseparably united to the Godhead, in the Person of the Son, who thus mediates between God his Father, and men his brethren.—*T. Scott.*

—From the words in ver. 6, it plainly appears that the principal notion of Mediator, as applied to Christ, is that of atonement. This is unrefragably proved by *Hilby* and *Magee*, the latter of whom shows that this doctrine of atonement is interwoven with the whole of the N. T.—*Hosmerfield.* Though the union of the Divine nature with the human, qualified Christ for the office of Mediator, yet this verse plainly shows

that it is in his human nature we are to consider him as discharging it.—*Doddridge.*

6. It is important to observe that none will be saved by the ransom of Christ without true faith; that true faith is the gift of God, and the effect of regeneration; that known unto God are all his works, from before the foundation of the world, and that all will certainly be saved who were given unto Christ, and whom he specially intended to save, when he became the Surety of his people. These propositions are capable of clear scriptural proof, and when they are established, we may safely leave such expressions, as are here used, to bear their obvious import. Indeed Divine wisdom and love are particularly shown in this general way of stating the truths of christianity; as far more suitable to inquirers and unestablished persons, than a systematical arrangement would be.—*T. Scott.*

Ver. 9—15. Women who profess the christian religion, must be modest in apparel, not affecting gaudiness, gaiety, or costliness; you may read the vanity of the minds of many persons in the gaiety and gaudiness of their habits; but there are better ornaments with which they should adorn themselves. Good works are the best ornament; these are, in the sight of God, of great price. Those who profess godliness should, in their dress, as well as other things, act as becomes their profession; instead of laying out their money on fine clothes, lay it out in works of piety and charity, which are properly called good works. Modesty and neatness are more to be consulted in their garments than elegance and fashion. Foppery and extravagance as to dress, in men, are emphatically condemned by the apostle's silence, intimating that they surely could not be guilty of such vanity.

It would be well if the professors of serious godliness were wholly exempt from disgraceful vanity in dress, and always spent as much time and money in relieving the sick and distressed, as they do in uselessly decorating themselves and their children, in a manner unsuitable to their rank in life, and inconsistent with their profession. These are not trifles or pharisaical impositions, but apostolical injunctions. The best ornaments for professors of godliness, are, good works.

According to St. Paul, women are not allowed to be public teachers in the church: for teaching is an office of authority. But, notwithstanding this prohibition, good women may and ought to teach their children at home the principles of true religion. Timothy from a child had known the

holy scriptures: and was taught by his mother and grandmother. 2 Tim. 3. 15. Aquila and his wife Priscilla expounded unto Apollos the way of God more perfectly; but then they did it privately, Acts 18. 26.

Also women must learn the principles of their religion, learn Christ, learn the scriptures; not think that their sex excuses them from learning what is necessary to salvation, though they must be silent, and subject, and not usurp authority. As woman was last in the creation, which is one reason for her subjection: so she was first in the transgression, and that is another reason. Adam was not deceived, that is, not first; but the woman was first in the transgression.

But there is a word of comfort, ver. 15, that they who continue in sobriety, shall be saved in child-bearing, or with child-bearing, by One descended from woman. The Messiah, who was born of a woman, should break the serpent's head, Gen. 3. 15; and the sentence which they are under for sin, shall be no bar to their acceptance with Christ. The daughters of Eve, involved in the like sentence with her, would share in the same salvation, joy, and blessing, through the promised Seed. Though in sorrow, yet she shall bring forth, and be a living mother of living children. It could have no curse in it, they all continuing in faith, and charity, and holiness, with sobriety. And the consideration of the especial ways to which the female sex is subjected, should cause men to exercise their authority with gentleness, tenderness, and affection.

9. Ancient medals and statues show the costume of those times with respect to the hair, the expensive ornaments then used, and the laboured forms in which female tresses were arranged.

15. It was promised that the Seed of the woman, and not of the man, should bruise the serpent's head, and therefore through her progeny it is that both the female and the male sex shall eventually be saved, if they live in faith, and christian love, and holiness, and sobriety.—*Shuttleworth.*

—There is no reason to doubt that the true meaning is, "by the child-bearing," referring not to the pains of parturition, but to the extraordinary event of the birth of our Saviour in a miraculous manner. She shall be saved, notwithstanding she was the means of human ruin by admitting the solicitations of Satan, if she continue in the exercise of christian virtue, and is herself a faithful servant of the Lord God; she shall be saved by the child-bearing, by that signal and miraculous child-bearing

which took place in the birth of the Messiah. The apostle is not adverting to any temporal circumstance; he is speaking of the entrance of sin by means of the woman, and it is natural to throw in a compensatory circumstance, reminding us, that as the inferior sex had been the source of human perversion, so it had the honour, in compensation, of being the immediate instrument of the production of the Messiah, by whom our recovery was effected. And the condition which follows, "if they continue in faith, and charity, and holiness with sobriety," puts this interpretation beyond doubt; as there is the greatest connexion between faith and virtue, without which our faith is vain, but none between perseverance in holiness, and exemption from the pains of child birth.—*R. Hall.*—The words may be rendered impersonally thus: "Notwithstanding there is salvation through the birth of a Son," (or child-bearing;) and the sense is, that, notwithstanding the fall of man by the means of the woman, yet there is salvation for both men and women, through the birth of Immanuel, the Child, born, and Son given.—*Gill.*

CHAPTER III.

The apostle describes what ought to be the qualifications and behaviour of gospel bishops, ver. 1-7. And of deacons and their wives, 8-13. He gives Timothy a reason of his writing about these, and other church affairs, for directing his own conduct, as an evangelist, 14-16.

Ver. 1-7. The word rendered bishop, was at that time of the same import as the word rendered elder or presbyter. Acts 20. 28. Whatever changes were introduced as the churches increased in numbers, we must here understand elders, or stated pastors, to be the persons intended, which is also evidenced by this silence of the apostle, concerning any other order than bishops and deacons. If a man desired the pastoral office, and from love to Christ, his flock and the souls of men, was ready to give up other prospects, and to expose himself to hardships, by devoting himself to that service, he sought to be employed in a good work, and his desire should be approved, provided he was qualified for the office. There ought to be an earnest desire of the office, in those put into it; if a man desire, he should earnestly desire it, for the prospect he has of bringing greater glory to God, and of doing the greatest good to the souls of men by this means. Whatever abilities or learning any man might possess, he was not eligible to the pastoral office, if he had not avoided scandalous vices, at least since his professed conversion to christianity.

A minister must be blameless; he must give as little occasion for blame as can be, lest he reflect reproach upon his office. He must be the husband of one wife; not having divorced one, and then taken another, or not having more than one wife at once, as at that time was common both among jews and gentiles. He must be vigilant and watchful against Satan, that subtle enemy; he must watch over himself, and the souls of those committed to his charge; he must improve all opportunities of doing them good. He must be sober, temperate, moderate in all his actions, and in the use of all creature-comforts. Sobriety and watchfulness are put together in scripture, they mutually assist one the other. He must be composed and solid, not light, vain, and frivolous. He must be given to hospitality; open-handed to the poor and his brethren, according to his ability. One who is fit to teach, and ready to take all opportunities of giving instruction; counting it his business, and making it his delight. Free from every degree of intemperance in the use of wine or strong liquors; as this would be scandalous, and would unfit him for the duties of his station. No striker; one who is not quarrelsome, or apt to use violence towards any, but does every thing with mildness, love, and gentleness. The servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle towards all, 2 Tim. 2. 24. One who does not take his ministry to forward any secular design or interest; who uses no mean, base, sordid ways of getting money; who is dead to the wealth of this world, lives above it, and makes it appear he is so. He must be patient, and not a brawler; of a mild disposition. Christ, the great Shepherd and Bishop of souls, is so. Not apt to be angry or quarrelsome: for how shall men teach others to govern their tongues, who do not keep them under good government themselves? Not covetous. Covetousness is had in any, but it is worst in a minister, whose calling leads him to converse so much with another world. He must be one who keeps his family in good order; that rules well his own house, that he may set a good example to other masters of families, and give a proof of his ability to take care of the church of God; for if a man know not

how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God? The families of ministers ought to be examples of good to all other families. Ministers must have their children in subjection: with all gravity. Not having his children in subjection with all austerity, but with all gravity. Not a novice; not one newly brought to the christian religion; not one who knows no more than the surface of religion, such a one is apt to be lifted up with pride: the more ignorant men are, the more proud they are. The devils fell through pride, which is a good reason why we should take heed of pride; it is a sin that turned angels into devils. The pride and ambition of ministers on account of their office, gifts, popularity, or success, are of a similar nature to the pride of Satan. He must be of good reputation among his neighbours, and under no reproach from his former conversation; for the devil will make use of that to ensnare others, and work in them aversion to the doctrine of Christ, if preached by those who are of bad report.

Having briefly gone through these qualifications, we see what piety, what prudence, what zeal, what courage, what faithfulness; what watchfulness over themselves, their lusts, appetites, and passions, and over those under their charge, and what holy watchfulness is necessary in this work! Have not the best qualified and the most faithful and conscientious ministers, just reason to complain against themselves, how far short they come of what they should be, and what they should do! Yet let those bless God, and be thankful, whom the Lord has enabled, and counted faithful, putting them into the ministry. If God is pleased to make any, in some degree, able and faithful, He alone must have the praise and glory. For the encouragement of all faithful ministers, we have Christ's gracious word of promise. Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world, Matt. 28. 20. And he will fit his ministers for their work in some measure, and carry them through the difficulties of it with comfort, pardon their imperfections, and reward their faithfulness with a crown of glory that fadeth not away, 1 Pet. 5. 4.

Let then none who desire, or have entered into this office, or have any concern in others entering into it, forget that

nothing can compensate for the want of proper motives, or a blameless conduct in those who minister in holy things.

2. The husband of one wife, neither means that a bishop or pastor is obliged to marry, nor that he ought never to marry a second wife. But it is designed to guard against polygamy, and divorces on frivolous occasions, both of which were then frequent, and were condemned by our Lord, Matt. 19. 3, 9.—*Guyse*.

Ver. 8—13. The deacons were at first appointed to distribute the charity of the church, and to manage its secular concerns, yet pastors and evangelists were among them. It was requisite that the deacons should be good characters, they had a great trust reposed in them. They must be grave, serious, prudent men. Not double tongued; that will say one thing to one, and another thing to another. Not given to much wine; for that is a great disparagement to any man, especially to a christian, it unfits men for business, and opens the door to many temptations. Not greedy of filthy lucre; this would especially be bad in the distributors of charity. The mystery of faith will never appear respectable among men, unless held in a pure conscience. ver. 10. The practical love of truth is the most powerful preservative from error and delusion. If we keep a pure conscience, and take heed of every thing that draws us away from God, that will preserve in our souls the mystery of faith. Let these also first be proved, ver. 10. It is not fit that public trusts should be lodged in the hands of any, till they are proved, and found fit for the business with which they are to be intrusted.

Their wives likewise must be of a grave behaviour, not slanderers, tale-bearers, carrying stories to make mischief and sow discord; they must not be given to any excess, but trusty in all that is committed to them. All who are related to ministers, must double their care to walk as becomes the gospel of Christ. The deacons must be the husbands of one wife; they must rule their children and their own houses well. The faithful discharge of this office would tend to the increase of their gifts and graces, and to give them courage in professing their faith.

Ver. 14—16. The apostle hoped shortly to come to Timothy to give him

further directions and assistance in his work. But Timothy must know how to conduct himself, not only in the particular church where he was now appointed to reside for some time, but, as being an evangelist, and the apostle's substitute in other churches; therefore it is not the church of Ephesus, but the church of Christ at large, which is here called the house of God, which is the church of the living God.

God is the living God; he is the Fountain of life, he is Life in himself; in him we live, and move, and have our being, Acts 17, 25, 28. The church is the house of God, he dwells there; the Lord has chosen Zion, to dwell there; there may we see God's power and glory, Psal. 63. 2. The church of Christ is the pillar and ground of truth. Not that the authority of the scriptures depends upon that of the church, for truth is the pillar and ground of the church. The church holds forth the scripture and the doctrine of Christ as a pillar, holds forth a proclamation. When a church ceases to be the pillar and ground of truth, we may and ought to forsake her; for our regard to truth should be greater than our regard to any church; we are no longer to continue therein than it continues to be the pillar and ground of truth.

Here is told what is the truth of which the churches and ministers are the pillars and grounds, ver. 16, that, without controversy, great is the mystery of godliness. The christian faith is a mystery, a mystery that could not have been found out by human reason or the light of nature. It is a mystery, not of philosophy, but designed to promote godliness; herein it excels all the mysteries of the gentiles. It is a revealed mystery, not shut up and sealed.

The mystery of godliness is Christ; and here are six things concerning Christ, which make up the mystery of godliness. 1. He is God manifest in the flesh. He is God, the eternal Word, who was made flesh, and was manifest in the flesh. When God was to be manifested to man, he was pleased to manifest himself in the incarnation of his own Son. 2. He is justified in the Spirit. Though reproached as a sinner, and put to death as a malefactor, he was raised again by the Spirit, and so was justified from all calumnies with which he was loaded. Being raised again, he was justified in

the Spirit; it was made to appear that his sacrifice was accepted, and so he rose again for our justification, as he was delivered for our offences, Rom. 4. 25. 3. He was seen of angels. They worshipped him, Heb. 1. 6, they attended his incarnation, his temptation, his agony, his death, his resurrection, his ascension; angels ministered to him, for he is the Lord of angels. 4. He is preached unto the gentiles. This is a mystery of godliness, that Christ was offered to the gentiles, as a Redeemer and Saviour. 5. He was believed on in the world, so that Christ was not preached in vain. The gentiles welcomed the Gospel which the Jews rejected. Who could have thought that the world, which lay in wickedness, would have believed in the Son of God, would have taken him to be their Saviour, who was himself crucified at Jerusalem. But thus he was believed on by many. 6. He was received up into glory, in his ascension. This was the crown of his exaltation, when all power in heaven and earth was given to him as the Intercessor for sinners.

May we glory in the mystery of godliness, and show the sanctifying efficacy of it in our lives. Let us remember that God was manifested in the flesh, to take away our sins, to redeem us from all iniquity, and to purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. These doctrines must be shown by the fruits of the Spirit in our lives. Let us learn to hate sin, forsake the world, be transformed into his image, filled with his love, and prepared to join the worship of angels.

Upon these blessed and glorious truths, engraven as on an everlasting pillar in the hearts of true Christians, let our best thoughts be employed upon them, while meditating, conversing, teaching, writing; regulating the whole and every part of our life by them; searching into them more and more, till thou art pleased, O Lord, to receive us, through the sufferings and merits of our Redeemer, to the higher contemplation of them in glory.—(83.)

16. Some have wished to read "which" or "who," instead of "God," in this verse. The difference in the original would be made by a very trifling variation in the characters used. But, as *Blumfield* states, the external evidence is decidedly in favour of the word "God," while that in favour of the reading "which," or

"who," is next to nothing; and the internal testimony against "which," or "who," is not less decisive, while it is objectionable on every ground. Also *J. P. Smith* shows that the reading "which," or "who," would oblige us to understand "the mystery" as a description of Christ personally, and that such a description is rational and intelligible only upon the admission of the Christian doctrine concerning the person of the Saviour.

The apostle is generally supposed to make some allusion to the heathen mysteries, and as those mysteries always have reference to some deity, this greatly favours, or rather confirms the common reading of this text—*T. H. Horn*. He refers to various statements of the evidence respecting this reading, and says, "The fullest view of the evidence, both external and internal, will be found in *Henderson's* 'Great Mystery of Godliness incontrovertible,' who has demonstrated the genuineness of the reading 'God,' from the united and indisputable testimonies of manuscripts, ancient versions, and quotations in the writings of the fathers, and the best printed editions of the Greek Testament, both early and recent, as well as from internal evidence."

—*Shuttleworth* remarks that the abrupt introduction and detached character of this passage, give it all the appearance of a compressed formula of doctrine. It thus forms an epitome of belief, consisting of the following articles, 1. The Divinity and incarnation of Christ. 2. The separate personality and implied Divinity of the Holy Spirit. 3. The universality of the offer of redemption to the human race. 4. The necessity of faith. 5. The re-ascension of our Saviour into glory, and the consequently implied resurrection of mankind. *Shuttleworth* would understand the word "angels" in this place to refer to the apostles as the companions and ministers of our Saviour, rather than to the angelic beings, in which sense the word is used at the beginning of the Apocalypse and elsewhere.

CHAPTER IV.

The apostle informs Timothy, by the spirit of prophecy, of departures from the faith in various instances, that began already to appear, and would issue in the great apostasy of after times, ver. 1—5. And, with reference thereto, gives him several directions, with suitable motives to enforce them, for a due discharge of the duties of his office, 6—16.

Ver. 1—5. We have here a prophecy of the apostasy of the latter times. The scriptures are arranged with Divine wisdom, so that even the apostasies of those who forsake the word of God confirm it to the true believer. The Spirit speaks expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith. The Spirit, in both the Old and the New Testaments, spake expressly of a general apostasy from the faith of Christ, and the pure worship of God. This should come in the latter times, during the Christian dispensation, for

those are called the latter days; in the following ages of the church, for the mystery of iniquity now began to work. Some shall depart from the faith, not all; for in the worst of times God will have a remnant, according to the election of grace. The faith delivered to the saints, Jude 3, is the sound doctrine of the gospel. Giving heed to seducing spirits; men who pretended to the Spirit.

One of the great instances of that apostasy is giving heed to doctrines concerning demons; those doctrines which teach the worship of saints and angels, as a middle sort of deities, between the immortal God and mortal men, such as the heathens called demons, and worshipped under that notion. Saint-worship is paganism revived. This apostasy will be promoted and propagated by the hypocrisy of those that speak lies, ver. 2; the agents and emissaries of Satan, who promote these delusions by lies, forgeries, and pretended miracles. It is done by their hypocrisy, professing honour to Christ, yet at the same time opposing all his offices, and corrupting or profaning all his ordinances. These doctrines and practices would be supported by the hypocrisy of liars, who would invent a variety of legends, impose by pretended miracles and revelations, and delude the multitude for their own gain. The habit of villany under the pretence of piety, would harden their consciences. Also, to fix a number of men in one common interest by separating from other connexions, they would forbid marriage, thus pretending to extraordinary holiness, by which means many abominations would be introduced. They would also forbid the use of meats at particular seasons, or entirely, thus keeping up authority over men's consciences.

On mentioning these hypocritical fastings, the apostle states the doctrine of the christian liberty which we enjoy under the gospel; that, whereas under the law there was a distinction of meats, it is now taken away. Nothing was to be refused as unclean, provided it was received with thankfulness. Temperate use according to the precept, and prayer for a blessing, made it holy for the believer, to fit him for the Lord's service. The judaizing teachers, and some of the early heretics, contended for some of these superstitious observances;

—the mystery of iniquity had already begun to work, but the church of Rome more fully carried out the fulfilment of these predictions in its detestable enormities. False teachers are most ready to forbid as evil, what God has allowed, and to command as a duty, what he has left indifferent. We find abundant exercise for watchfulness and self-denial, in attending to the requirements of God's law, without being tasked to imaginary duties, which are rejecting what he has allowed. But while satisfied that the creatures of God are not to be refused, let us remember that all must be received with thanksgiving by those who know and believe the truth, that nothing justifies an intemperate or improper use of them, and that nothing will be good to us unless we seek by prayer for the Lord's blessing upon it.

1. Bishop Newton has plainly shown that the worship of saints is the doctrine or worship of demons evidently revived, only the name is altered, and the saints are substituted for the demons: the divi or deified men of the christians, for the divi or deified men of the heathen. He adds, "The promoters of this worship were sensible it was the same, and that the one succeeded to the other: and as the worship is the same, so likewise is it performed with the same ceremonies, whether these ceremonies were derived from the same source of superstition common to all mankind, or were the direct copies of one another." After minutely specifying the particulars of resemblance, he says, "In short, the whole almost of paganism is converted and applied to popery; the one is manifestly formed upon the same plan and principles as the other, so that there is not only a conformity but even a uniformity in the worship of ancient and modern, of heathen and christian Rome."

Ver. 6—10. Timothy was to remind his brethren of these things, and thus he would be a good minister of Christ, and act as became one who had been fully instructed in the words of truth and good doctrine, who had derived spiritual nourishment from them, as he had made good proficiency in them. The fables and foolish traditions of jewish deceivers were to be rejected, and he was to exercise himself by daily study and meditation, in every part of godliness, and to instruct others therein. Outward acts of mortification and self-denial profit little, they turn to little account. What will it avail us to mortify the body, if we do not mortify sin? No diligence in mere outward things could be of much use. But godliness, according to the principles and rules of the gospel, benefited man

in all his relations, bestowing peace of mind, with abundant support and consolation, even where outward trials and sufferings might be sent, so that godliness might be said to be a faithful saying, worthy of universal acceptance. Our present solid satisfaction, as well as our eternal happiness, is inseparably connected with this, but all else is vanity and vexation of spirit.

Observe, the gain of godliness lies much in the promise: and the promises made to godly people relate partly to the life that now is; but especially they relate to the life which is to come. Under the Old Testament the promises were mostly of temporal blessings, but under the New Testament of spiritual and eternal blessings. If godly people have but little of the good things of the life that now is, yet all shall be made up to them in the good things of the life that is to come. All our labours and losses in the service of God and work of religion, will be abundantly recompensed: so that though we lose for Christ, we shall not lose by him. In dependence on these promises, the apostle and his brethren had laboured without wearying, and had suffered without fainting, because they trusted in the living God, who is the Preserver of all men in respect to their lives and temporal concerns, and who therefore will take especial care of believers who are interested in his covenanted blessings. If he be thus the Saviour of all men, we may hence infer, that much more he will be the Rewarder of those who seek and serve him. If he has such a good will for all his creatures, much more will he provide well for those whom he has made new creatures, who are born again.

8 "Little," may be understood both of degree and duration. "All things," in every way.—*Bloomfield.*

Ver. 11—16. Timothy was to command and teach these things. Command them to exercise themselves unto godliness, teach them the profit of it. He must conduct himself with gravity and prudence, that might gain him respect notwithstanding his youth, ver. 12. Men's youth will not be despised, if they do not by youthful vanities and follies make themselves despicable; and men who are old may do that. But be thou an example of the believers. Those who

teach by their doctrine, must teach by their life. Their discourse must be edifying; their conversation must be strict; they must be examples in love to God and all good men,—examples in spiritual-mindedness, in spiritual worship, in the profession of christian faith, and in purity. He must read and exhort: he must expound, both by way of exhortation, and by way of doctrine, teaching both what to do, and what to believe, ver. 13. As Timothy had been endued with excellent gifts according to the previous declarations of inspired men concerning him, ch. 1. 18, and with his solemn ordination to be a minister, by the laying on of the hands of the elders, as well as those of the apostle, 2 Tim. 1. 16, he must not neglect to exercise and improve these gifts.

The office of the ministry is a gift, it is the gift of Christ; when he ascended up on high, he received gifts for men, and he gave some apostles, and some pastors and teachers, Eph. 4. 8—11. Ministers ought not to neglect the gift bestowed upon them, whether by gift we understand the office of the ministry, or qualifications for that office.

Having this work committed to him, he must give himself wholly to it, ver. 15. Timothy was wise, yet he must show that he had improved in knowledge, devoting all his time and business to this important service. Ministers are to consider how and what they must speak; they are to meditate on the great trust committed to them, on the worth and value of immortal souls, and on the account they must give at the last. Give thyself wholly to them. Ministers must mind these things as their principal work and business. By this means their profiting will appear in all things, as well as to all persons; this is the way for them to profit in knowledge and grace, and also to profit others.

The apostle presses on Timothy to be very cautious, ver. 16. Take heed to thyself and to the doctrine, consider what thou preachest: continue in them, in the truths thou hast received. As he was placed amidst various snares and difficulties, and had by nature the same deceitful heart as others, he must take special heed to himself, to the state of his soul, his growth in grace, his motives, temper, and conduct in every thing. His doctrine must be scriptural,

clear, evangelical, and practical; well stated, explained, defended, and applied. This will be the way to save thyself, and those that hear thee, and to be the instrument of conversion to many.

These duties leave no leisure for dissipated pleasures, trifling visits, or idle conversation, and but little for what is mere amusement and only ornamental. May these admonitions be written upon our souls, and may we meditate continually upon them: may every believer thus be enabled to let his profiting appear unto all men, seeking to experience the power of the gospel in his own soul, and to bring forth the fruits in his life.

12. *Aulus Gellius* relates that among the roman people, childhood was limited to the age of 17, youth from that time to 46, old age from thence to the end of life. If Timothy had been 20 years old when he became Paul's assistant about A. D. 50, he would be about 34 when this epistle is supposed to have been written. Timothy therefore was then in that period of life which both by the greeks and romans was considered as youth.

CHAPTER V.

Directions are given how to behave towards the elder and younger men and women, ver. 1, 2. And toward poor widows, 3-8. The characters of such widows, as are, and are not, proper to be maintained by the church, and taken into its service, are described, 9-16. The respect to be paid to elders by office is shown, 17-19. Timothy is to take care in rebuking offenders of all ranks and stations, in ordaining ministers, and in using such moderate refreshments, as were necessary for his own weak state of health, 20-25.

Ver. 1, 2. Respect must be paid to the dignity of years and place, elders must not be rebuked sharply or magisterially. Timothy, though an evangelist, must treat them as fathers, which would be the most likely way to win upon them. The younger, if faulty, must be rebuked as brethren, with tenderness; not as being desirous to find faults, but as willing to make the best of them. There is need of much meekness in reproving those who deserve reproof. The elder women must be reproofed, when there is occasion; but they must be reproofed as mothers, Hos. 2, 2. Plead with your mother, plead. What is harsh and assuming must be improper in the conduct of the younger towards their elders, even as it would

be in the conduct of a son to his parents. The younger women must be reproofed, but reproofed as sisters, with all purity. If Timothy had need of such a caution much more have we.

Ver. 3-8. The rule here given, is to honour widows that are widows indeed, to maintain them, to relieve them with respect and tenderness. But the church should not be charged with the maintenance of widows who had relations of their own able to maintain them. This is called showing piety at home, ver. 4, or showing piety towards their own families. The respect of children to their parents, and the care of them, is fitly called piety. This is requiring their parents. It is the indispensable duty of children, if their parents are in necessity, and they able to relieve them, to do it to the utmost of their power, for that is good and acceptable before God. She is to be reckoned a widow indeed, and to be maintained at the charge of the church, who, being desolate, trusteth in God. God sometimes brings his people into such straits, that they may with more confidence trust in him. Widowhood is a desolate estate; but let widows trust in the Lord, Jer. 49. 11, and rejoice that they have a God to trust. Those who trust in God, must continue in prayer. If by faith we confide in God, by prayer we give glory to God, and commit ourselves to his guidance. Anna was a widow indeed, who served God with fasting and prayer night and day, Luke 2. 37. But she is not a widow indeed, that lives in pleasure, ver. 6, a luxurious, self-indulgent life. She is dead while she lives, is no living member of the church, but as a carcase, or a mortified member in it. All those who live in pleasure, are dead while they live, spiritually dead, dead in trespasses and sins; they are in the world to no purpose, as to the great ends of living. Alas, what numbers there are of this description among nominal christians, even at the latest period of life! These directions were to be impressed upon the church, that the body of professing christians might be preserved blameless, and no encouragement given by their kindness to any thing scandalous.

If any man or woman do not maintain their own poor relations, they in effect deny the faith; for the design of Christ

was to confirm the law, the fifth commandment of which is, Honour thy father and mother; so that those deny the faith, who disobey that law, much more if they provide not for their wives and children, who are parts of themselves. If they spend that upon their lusts and pleasures, which should maintain their families, they have denied the faith, and are worse than infidels. But covetous persons sometimes pervert this text, and act as though they were to neglect the duties of piety, justice, and charity, to enrich their children. It is the indispensable duty of children and grandchildren to requite the kindness of their aged parents; and if professors of the gospel, through selfishness or any corrupt principle, neglect or refuse to provide for their near connexions, they are worse than those who do not profess to believe the doctrines of grace.

4. "Nephews," grandchildren — *Doddridge*.

Ver. 9—16. Aged widows, and others of good character, who are left destitute in the decline of life should be honoured as well as supported. The directions here given are supposed to relate to the selection of widows who discharged official duties in the church, who visited the sick and poor females, and attended to various matters connected with ministers and strangers. Every one who is brought into any office in the church, should be free from just censure; many are proper objects of charity, yet ought not to be employed in public services.

Here are instanced such good works as are proper to be done by good wives. If she have brought up children, if she have been ready to entertain needy christians and godly ministers, if she have relieved the afflicted when she had ability. Those who would find mercy when they are in distress, must show mercy when they are in prosperity; and those who have shown most readiness for every good work, are most likely to be faithful in whatever is intrusted to them.

They are not to admit into the number the younger widows; these will be weary of their employments in the church, and of living by rule, as they must do; so they will marry and cast off their first faith, that is, the engagements they gave to the church to discharge the trust reposed in them, ver. 13. They might be induced to marry again, and as their en-

trance into the number of devoted widows implied an engagement to the contrary, so their departure from it might be called a rebellion against Christ. They learn to be idle, and not only idle, but tattlers. Observe, it is very seldom that those who are idle, are only idle, they learn to make mischief among neighbours, and sow discord among brethren. Observe, if women do not mind their business, but are tattlers, they give occasion to the adversaries of christianity to reproach the christian name, ver. 14. The younger widows therefore had better be engaged in the duties of the married state, and the cares of a family, than be exposed to the temptation of undertaking offices they would wish to forsake, or as to which they would give occasion to the adversaries of the gospel to speak reproachfully. Or, in case of their becoming unfaithful to Christ for the sake of an earthly object, this engagement would serve to their condemnation, by occasioning them to depart from that fidelity to Christ which they had promised, perhaps by marrying heathens, and they would be exposed to condemnation unless they repented. All believers are required, ver. 16, to relieve such widows belonging to their families, as are destitute, that the church may not be prevented from relieving such as are entirely destitute and friendless.

9. *Shuttleworth* notices the wisdom of this injunction, as resolutions to forsake the active duties of life, formed under the momentary operation of some devotional excitement, are often ill-adapted to the bodily and intellectual temperament of the persons forming them. He says, Had the church of Rome, when she gave her confirmation to the indissoluble obligation of monastic vows, seriously weighed the caution in this passage, how vast a mass of misery, the consequence of ineffectual regret, and of an alarmed conscience reproaching itself with instinctive, but involuntary recollections of a world it had abjured, would she have removed from many a now blighted victim of ill-judging piety, or gloomy superstition.

Ver. 17—25. Care must be taken that ministers are honourably maintained, ver. 17. Here we have the work of ministers; principally two things,—ruling well, and labouring in the word and doctrine. Also the honour due to those who are laborious in this work; they were worthy of double honour, esteem, and maintenance. The apostle quotes a scripture to confirm this command concerning the mainte-

nance of ministers, which intimates what a significancy there was in many of the laws of Moses, particularly in Deut. 25. 4. Does God care for oxen, and will he not take care of his own servants? The ox only treads out the corn, of which men make the bread that perishes; but ministers dispense the bread of life which endures for ever, and it is God's appointment that those who preach the gospel should live of the gospel, 1 Cor. 9. 14; it is their just due, as much as the reward of the labourer. This passage of scripture seems intended to teach us that every religious society should, as far as it is able, provide for such persons as are here described, and not leave them to want in their old age.

Here is the scripture method of proceeding against an elder, when accused of any crime, ver. 19. There must be an accusation, not a flying uncertain report; but a certain charge must be drawn up. This accusation is not to be received, unless supported by two or three credible witnesses; and the accusation must be received before them, that is, the accused must have the accusers face to face. The reputation of a minister is, in a particular manner, a tender thing, and therefore he must not be reproached upon an uncertain surmise; but, ver. 20, those who sin, rebuke before all; that those in danger of sinning by the example of their fall, may take warning by the rebuke for it.

As to Timothy himself, here is a solemn charge to him to be careful of his office, ver. 21. It ill becomes ministers to be partial, and to prefer one before another on any secular account. The apostle charges him solemnly before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels, to guard against partiality. Ministers must give an account to God and the Lord Jesus Christ, whether, and how, they have observed all given them in charge: and woe to them if they have been partial in their ministrations, from any worldly view.

Lay hands suddenly on no man, ver. 22, seems to be meant of ordaining men to the office of the ministry, which ought not to be done rashly and inconsiderately, and before due trial made of their gifts and graces, their abilities and qualifications, and examination of their characters, principles, motives, and endowments. Thus Timothy would need to

avoid being answerable, in part at least, for the sins of those who intruded into the ministerial office. How far this rule is observed, and how far it is violated, every man's conscience must determine for himself, till Christ shall come to take account of his servants; but it is certain that these things involve much responsibility, and that much which is wrong remains uncensured. We have great need to watch at all times, that we do not make ourselves partakers of other men's sins. Keep thyself pure, not only from doing the like thyself, but from countenancing it, or being any way accessory to it in others.

The apostle also charges Timothy to take care of his health; Drink no longer water, ver. 23. It seems, Timothy was a man mortified to the pleasures of sense; and he was not a man of strong constitution of body, and for that reason Paul advises him to use wine. Observe, it is a little wine, for ministers must not be given to much wine; so much as may be for the health of the body, not so as to distemper it; for God has made wine to rejoice man's heart. It is the will of God that people should take due care of their bodies. As we are not to make them our masters, so neither our slaves; but to use them so as they may be most fit and helpful to us in the service of God. Also wine should be used as a help, not as a hindrance to our work and usefulness. It seems to have occurred to the apostle when noticing the cares and labours of Timothy, that his frequent illness might be increased by refraining from the use of wine, and he abruptly notices it.

Some men's sins are so plain and obvious, there is no dispute concerning them, ver. 24; they go before to judgment, to lead them to censure. Others they follow after; their wickedness does not appear till after search has been made concerning it. As to the evidences of repentance; the good works of some are manifest beforehand. And they that are otherwise, whose good works do not appear, their wickedness cannot be hid. There are secret, and there are open sins; some men's sins are open beforehand, and going before unto judgment, and some they follow after. The incorrigible cannot be hid; for God will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and make manifest

the counsels of all hearts. This appears connected with the directions respecting ministers, but we may apply it to offenders generally; and be assured those who desire honestly to discharge their duty, will be directed.

In expectation of the judgment day, let us all attend to our proper offices, whether we are in superior or inferior stations of life, studying so to conduct ourselves, that the name and doctrine of God may never be blasphemed on our account.—(80.)

21. Before Jesus Christ, the God and Lord, or, our God and Lord.—*G. Sharp.*

— In whatever sense we understand this charge as given before the angels, it relates to them, not as judges, but as witnesses.—*Guyse.*

23. *Macnight* notices the propriety with which this verse is inserted in an inspired writing, because the supererogation of those who on ascetic principles, or pretences to superior holiness, use total abstinence from any thing lawful, is thereby condemned. *Paley* observes that the inartificial arrangement of this passage is a strong evidence for the genuineness of the epistle.

24. The judgment here intended, seems not to be the final day of account, but is to be understood of the judgment that is to be passed, in just and charitable constructions, upon person's characters with a view to their admission to the sacred office of the ministry.—*Guyse.*

CHAPTER VI.

The apostle states the duty of christians towards believing, as well as other masters, with a severe reproof to judaizers who taught otherwise, ver. 1-5. Shows the advantage of godliness with contentment, and the danger of covetous pursuit after riches, 6-10. Directs Timothy to a contrary course, 11, 12. Gives him a solemn charge to behave faithfully in a persevering attention to his orders, and in admonishing the rich not to trust in their riches, but in the living God, and to improve the Divine bounties to the best purposes, 13-16. And repeats his charge with some enlargement, closing all with a short, but comprehensive benediction, 17-21.

Ver. 1-5. Christians under the yoke of slavery should quietly attend to their duties, not supposing that religious knowledge, or christian privileges, gave any right to despise heathen masters, or to disobey lawful commands, or to expose their faults to others. They were to act thus, that the name of God might not be blasphemed, nor his truth and worship reviled among the gentiles, by any failure in the duties of christian servants. And such as enjoyed the pri-

vilage of living with believing masters, were not to withhold due respect and reverence from them, because they were brethren in Christ, and thus upon a level in respect to religious privileges, but to serve them with double diligence and cheerfulness, because of their faith in Christ, and interest in his love, as partakers of the inestimable benefit of his free salvation. It is a great encouragement to us in doing our duty to those connected with us, if we have reason to think they are faithful and beloved, and partakers of the benefit. The condition of servants at the present day, for the most part admits of their changing their masters, but these precepts of God's word remain equally applicable, as to their conduct, to the masters they serve. It is sad that the name of God is often blasphemed through professing servants who act otherwise. Thousands thus have been fatally prejudiced against the gospel. These things Timothy was to teach and exhort, as of the greatest importance, and he was warned to withdraw from those who corrupted the doctrine of Christ, and made it the subject of strife, debate, and controversy. We are not required to consent to any words as wholesome words, except the words of our Lord Jesus Christ; but to these we must give our unfeigned assent and consent, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness. The words of our Lord Jesus Christ are wholesome words, they are the fittest to prevent or heal the wounds of the church, as well as to heal a wounded conscience.

Observe, the doctrine of our Lord Jesus has direct tendency to make people godly; but he that does not act agreeably thereto is proud, ver. 4, contentious, ignorant, and does much mischief to the church, knowing nothing. Commonly those are most proud, who know least; for with all their knowledge they do not know themselves, but dote about questions. When men are not content with the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the doctrine which is according to godliness, but frame notions of their own, and impose them, and that in their own words, which man's wisdom teaches, and not in the words which the Holy Ghost teaches, 1 Cor. 2. 13; they sow the seeds of all mischief in the church. Hence come

envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, ver. 5, disputes that are all subtilty, and of no solidity, between men of corrupt and carnal minds, destitute of the real knowledge of the truth, and its sanctifying efficacy, and only seeking their own worldly advantage, supposing religion to be valuable as it tended to enrich them, supposing gain to be godliness, contrary to the apostle's judgment, who reckoned godliness great gain. Instead of engaging in controversy with such wranglers, who will not consent to the plain meaning of the words even of Christ himself, we should withdraw and protest against them.

5. "That godliness is gain."—*Scholesfield*.

Ver. 6—10. We see here, 1. The excellency of contentment, ver. 6. Those that make a trade of christianity merely to serve their turn for this world. will be disappointed; but those who mind it as their calling, and make a business of it, will find it has the promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come. Godliness with contentment is great gain, that is, christian contentment, contentment founded upon principles of godliness, is great gain. He that is godly, is sure to be happy in another world; and if he, by contentment, accommodates himself to his condition in this world, he has enough, and all truly godly people have learned with St. Paul, in whatever state they are, to be therewith content, Phil. 4. 11. They are content with what God allots for them, well knowing that is best for them. We brought nothing with us into this world, yet God has provided for us, care was taken of us, we have been fed all our lives long unto this day; and when reduced to the greatest straits, we cannot be poorer than when we came into this world, therefore let us trust in God for the remaining part of our pilgrimage.

We shall carry nothing with us out of this world; a shroud, a coffin, and a grave, are all that the richest man in the world can have from his thousands. Why should we not be content with a little? How much soever we have we must leave it behind us, Eccl. 5. 15, 16.

Therefore, Having food and raiment, let us be therewith content, ver. 8. If nature should be content with a little,

grace should be content with less; though we have not dainty food, though we have not costly raiment, if we have but food and raiment convenient for us, we ought to be content. This was Agur's prayer, Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me, Prov. 30., 8. Here we see the folly of placing our happiness in these things. What will be done when death shall strip me of their worldly happiness and portion, and they must take an everlasting farewell of all the things on which they so much doted? The necessities of life are the bounds of a true christian's desire, and with these he will endeavour to be content.

We see here, 2. The evil of covetousness, ver. 9. They that will be rich, fall into temptation and a snare, those that set their hearts upon the wealth of this world, and are resolved they will have it. It is not said, they that are rich, but they that *will be* rich, that is, who place their happiness in wealth, and are eager and determined in the pursuit of it. Those that are such, give to Satan the opportunity of tempting and ensnaring them into such actions as are opposed to godliness and a good conscience, inducing them to use dishonest means to increase their gains, and a variety of fraudulent practices. Also leading them into so many employments, and such a hurry of business, as leaves no time or inclination for spiritual religion, leading to such connexions as draw them into sin and folly. Worldly lusts are foolish and hurtful, for they drown men in destruction and perdition. They are foolish, and therefore we should be ashamed of them; hurtful, and therefore we should be afraid of them, especially considering to what a degree they are hurtful, for they drown men in destruction and perdition.

The love of money is the root of all evil, ver. 10. What sins will not men be drawn to by the love of money! People may have money, and yet not love it; but if they love it, this will push them on to all evil. Covetous persons will quit the faith, if that be the way to get money, and many by coveting after it, have erred from the faith. Every sort of wickedness and vice, in one way or another, grows from the love of money. A great deal of the miseries as well as the crimes of mankind, come from this

source. Some professors, even in the days of the apostle, had coveted riches, and thus been led into apostasy, and to corrupt the faith; thus they had pierced themselves through, even those who were not wholly ruined were filled with many sorrows, and had to endure severe anguish. All this would have been avoided had they been contented with food and raiment, and had they watched with prayer against the desire of becoming rich. We cannot look around us without perceiving instances of this, especially in a day of outward prosperity, great expenses, and loose profession.

6. Content is a part of the gain that attends godliness. The form of expression is as if they were not to be mentioned apart. The true knowledge of God so directly tends to holiness, and that to contentment, that it may be too evidently concluded that a discontented person has little of one or the other, not much knowledge, and less grace. The discontented person takes it upon him as if he were God alone, and as if he expected every creature to do him homage, and thought the creature were made for the pleasure and service of none but him. Hath that person seen God who acknowledges him not a sufficient portion, a full, all-comprehending good? Has he seen Him, who sees not reason to trust Him, to commit all his concerns to Him? Has he seen Him who loves him not, and delights not in his love? Has he seen Him, who quits not all for Him? How evidently these things tend to quiet and compose the soul! Discontent proceeds from idolizing thoughts of ourselves; it is rooted in self conceit, in self-dependence, self-love, self-seeking, all which despicable idols, (or that our great idol, self,) thus variously served and idolized, one sight of the Divine glory would confound and bring to nothing. The sights of God melt the heart, break it under a sense of sin, and thence compose it to a meek, peaceful humility; but the discontented spirit is an unbroken, proud, imperious spirit. The sights of God purify the soul, refine it from the dross of this vile world, make it daily aspire to a conformity to the pure and spiritual nature of God. But a discontented spirit is a sensual, earthly spirit; for what but such objects are the usual matter of most men's discontents?—*Howe*.

Ver. 11, 12. The apostle addresses Timothy as a man of God. Ministers of Christ are men of God, and ought to conduct themselves accordingly; they are men employed for God. He charges Timothy to take heed of the love of money, which had been so pernicious to many. Flee these things. It ill becomes any men, but especially men of God, to set their hearts upon the things of this world; men of God should be taken up with the things of God. He directs him to more entire conformity to the

perfect rule of universal righteousness, by upright faithful conduct towards all men, and towards God in all things; a lively faith in Christ and the divine promises in him, as well as faithfulness in his stewardship; love to the Lord, his brethren, and mankind; patience under sufferings, meekness under injuries. Thus let him fight the good fight of faith. There must be a conflict with corruption and temptations, and the powers of darkness. It is a good cause, and it will have a good issue; it is the fight of faith; the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, 2 Cor. 10. 3, 4. Eternal life is the crown proposed for our encouragement. Lay hold of it, and take heed of losing your hold. We are called to lay hold on eternal life. The profession Timothy and all faithful ministers make before many witnesses, is a good profession; for they profess and engage to fight the good fight of faith, and to lay hold on eternal life; their calling and their own profession oblige them unto this.

Ver. 13—16. The apostle gives Timothy a solemn charge that all the trust reposed in him, all the service expected from him, he must keep it without spot, unrelukable. He must conduct himself so in his ministry as not to lay himself open to blame. Especially he must point out to the rich their peculiar dangers and duties, and be faithful in delivering his Master's message, as to the proper use and employment of wealth. But who can give such a charge who is not himself superior to the love of any thing wealth can purchase?

He charges Timothy, as he will answer at the great day, to that God who sees what we are, and what we do—God, who quickens all things, who is the Fountain of life. This should quicken us to the service of God. He charges him before Christ Jesus, to whom he stood bound as a minister of his gospel; who before Pilate declared, My kingdom is not of this world; I am come to bear witness unto the truth, John 18. 36, 37. That good confession should draw all his followers, ministers and people, from love of this world.

He reminds him of Christ's second coming. Keep this commandment, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ; keep it as long as thou livest,

Keep it with reference to his second coming, when all must account for the talents intrusted to them, Luke 16. 2.

The appearing of Christ is certain, ver. 15 : but it is not for us to know the time; the Father has kept that in his own power; let this suffice, that he shall show it in the time that he thinks best. He is the blessed and the only Potentate, and nothing can impair his happiness. All the kings of the earth derive power from him; he has sovereign dominion over them. He has immortality, as he is the Fountain of it, for the immortality of angels and spirits, is derived from him. He dwells in light no man can approach: no man can enter heaven, but those he is pleased to bring thither, and admit into his kingdom. He is invisible; whom no man hath seen, nor can see. It is impossible that mortal eyes should bear the brightness of the Divine glory. None can approach him except as revealed unto sinners in and by the incarnate Son. The Godhead is here adored without distinction of Persons, as all these things are properly spoken, whether of the Father, the Son, or the Holy Ghost. The invisible God is revealed to us, only in and through the human nature of Christ, as the only-begotten Son of the Father; and this display of the Divine glory will be most illustrious when Christ shall be seen by the assembled universe, exercising all the power, authority, and perfections of God. In his own time he will be thus manifested.

15. At his own good time, he that sooner or later.—*Bloomfield.*

16. Immortality self-derived.—*Bloomfield.*

Ver. 17—21. Those who are rich, must take care of the temptations, and improve the opportunities of their prosperous estate. Being rich in this world is wholly different from being rich towards God. Pride easily besets those whom the world smiles upon. Charge them that they be not high-minded, or puffed up with their wealth. Caution them against vain confidence in their wealth. Nothing is more uncertain than the wealth of this world. Riches make themselves wings, and fly away, Prov. 23. 5. Charge them to trust in the living God; to make him their Hope who giveth richly all things to enjoy. Those who are rich, must see God, giving them their riches, and giving them to enjoy them richly; for many

have riches, but enjoy them poorly, not having a heart to use them. He must charge them to do good with what they have; for what is the best estate worth, any more than as it gives opportunity of doing the more good? Those are truly rich, who are rich in good works. That they be ready to distribute, to do it willingly, for God loves a cheerful giver. Riches must soon be left at death, and an account be given in the day of judgment. They must think of another world, and prepare by laying up in store a good foundation. Showing their faith in Christ the Rock by unequivocal fruits of love and obedience, they might lay hold on eternal life, when the self-indulgent, covetous, and ungodly around them, would lift up their eyes in torment. In the way of well-doing we are to seek for glory, honour, and immortality, and eternal life will be the end of all, Rom. 2. 7.

Here is a lesson for ministers; Keep that which is committed to thy trust. Every minister has treasure committed to his trust to keep. The truths of God, the ordinances of God, keep these, avoiding profane and vain babblings; not affecting human eloquence, which the apostle calls vain babblings, or human learning, which often opposes the truths of God, but keep close to the written word, that is committed to our trust. Some who have been very proud of their learning, have by that been drawn away from the faith of Christ, which is a good reason why we should keep to the plain word of the gospel. That science which opposes the truth of the gospel, is not true science, or it would approve the gospel, and consent to it. Those fond of such science, are in danger of erring concerning the faith; those who advance reason above faith, are in danger of leaving faith.

Ministers must be earnestly exhorted to keep what is committed to their trust, because it is a great trust lodged with them; Timothy, be sure to keep this trust. The apostle concludes with a solemn prayer and benediction; Grace be with thee, Amen. This is a short, yet comprehensive prayer for our friends. Grace be with them, for grace comprehends in it all that is good, and grace is an earnest, a beginning of glory; wherever God gives grace, he will give glory, and will not withhold any good thing from him who walketh uprightly.

THE SECOND EPISTLE TO TIMOTHY.

THE second epistle to Timothy undoubtedly was written by St Paul during one of his imprisonments at Rome, whether during the first, which is mentioned Acts 28, or the second, which is recorded in ecclesiastical history, has been much disputed, but the latter appears most probable, and *Haley* shows this view is strongly supported by the mention that is made of Erastus and Trophimus, and other internal evidence.

The immediate design was to apprise Timothy of the circumstances which had occurred during the imprisonment of the apostle, and to request him to come to Rome. But being uncertain whether he should be suffered to live to see him, Paul gives a variety of advices, charges, and encouragements for the faithful discharge of his ministerial functions. Many of these instructions are very forcible and affecting. The contents may be stated, 1. Exhortations to diligence, patience, and firmness in keeping the form of sound doctrine, ch. 1. 2. Exhortations to fortitude under afflictions and persecutions, to deliver the sound doctrine of the gospel to others, and to purity of life, ch. 2. 3. To beware of false teachers, whose practices are described; to be constant and diligent in his ministerial labours, ch. 3 and 4, 1-8. 4. In conclusion, the apostle requests Timothy to come to him speedily, and gives some directions and salutations.

As this was a private epistle written to St Paul's most intimate friend, under the miseries of imprisonment, and in the near prospect of death, it exhibits the temper and character of the apostle, and contains convincing proofs that he sincerely believed the doctrines he preached.

Benson says, we are to imagine a pious father, under sentence of death for his piety and benevolence to mankind, writing to a dutiful and affectionate son, that he may see and embrace him again before he leaves the world; particularly that he may leave with him his dying commands, and charge him to live and suffer as he had done—and then we shall have the frame of the apostle's mind during the writing of this epistle.

CHAPTER I.

Paul asserts his apostolic character, salutes Timothy, and expresses his great affection to him, in remembrance of his sympathizing tears and unfeigned faith, ver. 1-5. Exhorts him to a diligent improvement of his spiritual gifts, without fear or shame, on account of sufferings for Christ, who has brought life and immortality to light by the gospel; and to hold fast that blessed doctrine, which was committed to him, 6-14. And tells him of many who had basely deserted him; but speaks with honour and affection of Onesiphorus, for his kindness to him, 15-18.

Ver. 1-5. The gospel intrusted to the apostle by the sovereign will of God, accorded with the promise of life and salvation made to fallen man, through the predicted Messiah. All these predictions were fulfilled in Christ, and then the promise of life was sent to the gentiles also. The promise of eternal life to believers in Christ Jesus, is the leading subject in the preaching of those ministers who are employed according to the will of God. Paul felt the warmest affection for Timothy; he had been an instrument of his conversion, and as a son with his father he had served with him in the gospel. The blessings here named, are the best we can ask for our

dearly beloved friends, that they may have grace to help them in the time of need, and mercy to pardon what is amiss, and so may have peace with God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

Paul thanks God that he remembered Timothy in his prayers. Whatever good we do, and whatever good office we perform for our friends, God must have the glory of it. He served and worshipped God after the manner of Abraham, and his other pious forefathers. True believers have in every age the same religion as to its substance. His conscience was cleansed by the atoning blood, and made tender and well informed by Divine grace, so that he now served God conscientiously and cheerfully, with spiritual worship and believing obedience. Paul prayed night and day; in all his prayers he was mindful of his friends, he did this without ceasing, prayer was his constant business, and he never forgot his friends in his prayers. He was mindful of the tears by which Timothy expressed his love and sorrow when they last parted, and desired another interview, being assured that it would afford him satisfaction.

This persuasion arose from recollecting the unfeigned faith which the con-

duct of Timothy manifested, as influencing and sanctifying his heart, which was the same as had been possessed by his grandmother Lois, and his mother Eunice. The religious education they gave Timothy, was made instrumental to his partaking the same faith.

The pious instructions and fervent prayers of believing parents, often are the means of their children's conversion, but they must be ever reminded that no benefit can be derived from the unfeigned faith of even the nearest relations, unless the same dwells in them also. The faith of real believers, is unfeigned; it is without hypocrisy, it is a faith that will stand the trial, and it dwells in them as a living principle.

Thus pious women may take encouragement from the success of Lois and Eunice with respect to Timothy, who proved so excellent and useful a minister; some perhaps of the worthiest and most valuable ministers the church of Christ has been blessed with, have had reason to bless God for the early impressions made upon their mind by the religious instruction of persons in the same relation.—(80)

4 The tears of Timothy were an undoubted token of his love, and so Paul accepted them; and for that cause was mindful of them, which offers us this observation—That the signs of affection are not to be forgotten; or to what end were so many small matters recorded in the holy scriptures? as the tilling away a stone, a handful of corn, a morsel of bread, or a dip in vinegar, and the like.—*Barlow*.

Ver. 6—10. Paul exhorts Timothy to stir up the gift of God that was in him. Stir it up as fire under the embers. It is meant of all the gifts and graces God had given him, to qualify him for the work of an evangelist; the gifts of the Holy Ghost, the extraordinary gifts that were conferred by the putting on of the apostle's hands; he must exercise them, and so increase them. The great hinderance of usefulness in the increase of our gifts, is, slavish fear; therefore the apostle warns against this; God hath not given us the spirit of fear, ver. 7, but hath given us the spirit of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. The spirit of power, of courage and resolution, to encounter difficulties and dangers; the spirit of love to God, which will carry us through the opposition we may meet with. And the spirit of a sound mind, quietness of mind, a peace-

able enjoyment of ourselves, for we are oftentimes discouraged in our way and work, by the creatures of our own fancy and imagination. The Holy Spirit, which God had given them as established believers, was not the author of a timid or cowardly disposition, or of slavish and discouraging fears.

We must not be ashamed of those, who suffer for the gospel of Christ. Timothy must expect afflictions for the gospel's sake, and be willing to take his lot with suffering saints in this world. We are likely to bear afflictions well, when we obtain strength and power from God to enable us to bear them. The apostle shows Timothy the nature of that gospel he was called to suffer for, and its glorious and gracious designs and purposes. As is usual with Paul, when he mentions Christ and his salvation, he enlarges upon them; so full was he of that which is all our salvation, and ought to be all our desire. All who shall be saved hereafter, are sanctified now. Wherever the call of the gospel is effectual, it is found to be a holy call, making holy. Salvation is of free grace, not according to our works, and we must not think much of any sufferings for it. This grace is said to be given us before the world began, that is, in the purpose and design of God from all eternity; in Christ Jesus, for all the gifts that come from God to sinful man, come in and through Christ Jesus. The gospel is the manifestation of this purpose and grace, by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ in human nature. By the gospel of Christ death is abolished; Christ has broken the power of death; by taking away sin he has abolished death, for the sting of death is sin, 1 Cor. 15. 56, altering the property of it, and breaking the power of it. Death now is become the friend of the believer, it is the gate by which he passes out of a troublesome, vexatious, sinful world, into a world of perfect peace and purity; and the power thereof is broken, for death does not triumph over those who believe the gospel, but they triumph over it, 1 Cor. 15. 55. Christ has showed us another world, more clearly than it was discovered under any former dispensation, and the happiness of that world. It is brought to light, not only set before us, but offered to us, by the gospel.

Let us value the gospel as that whereby life and immortality are brought to light. Whatever notions the gentiles had of the immortality of the soul, they knew nothing of the way in which eternal life might be attained by sinners. They were wholly ignorant of the meaning scripture annexes to the words life and immortality. This rests entirely on Divine revelation, as well as the way of acceptance of a sinner. And as there is such assurance of a future state, and so clear a prospect of eternal happiness by faith in Him, who is the Resurrection and the Life, let us give more diligence in making sure to our souls, a personal interest in his salvation.

Ver. 11—14. The apostle was appointed to preach the gospel, and particularly to teach the gentiles the way to eternal life and happiness, ver. 11, 12. He thought it a cause worth suffering for. He says, I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day. Those who adhere to the gospel, need not be ashamed—the cause will bear them out; but those who oppose it, shall be ashamed. Those who trust in Christ, know whom they have trusted. The apostle speaks with holy triumph and exultation, he knows he stands on firm ground, he had lodged the great trust in the hands of the Divine Saviour in whom he had believed, of whose compassion and kindness he could not doubt, and of whose power and willingness to care for him he was persuaded. He had entrusted his life, his soul, and his eternal interests, to the Lord Jesus as a precious deposit. He had discovered their value and their danger. He knew that no one else could effectually deliver and secure his soul through the trials of life and death. What he might have to pass through he knew not, but he was persuaded his Lord was fully able to keep him to that great day to which he had respect, when his Saviour would again appear in glorious majesty to judge the world. His most important interests were thus secured beyond the reach of all enemies.

What must we commit to Christ? The salvation of our souls, and their preservation to the heavenly kingdom; and what we so commit to him he will

keep. There is a day coming, when our souls will be inquired after. Thou hadst a soul committed to thee, what hast thou done with it? To whom was it offered—to God or Satan? How was it employed—in the service of sin, or in the service of Christ? There is a day coming, and it will be a very solemn and awful day, when we must give an account of our stewardship, Luke 16. 2, give an account of our souls. If by an active obedient faith the soul is committed now to Jesus Christ, we may be sure he is able to keep it, and it shall be forthcoming to our comfort in that day. The hope of the most humble real christian rests on the same foundation as that of the great apostle. He also has learned the value and the danger of his soul; he also has believed in Christ, and experiences his truth and compassion. The answers to his prayers, and the change wrought in his soul, persuade the believer that the Lord Jesus will preserve him to his heavenly kingdom.

Paul exhorts Timothy to hold fast the form of sound words, ver. 13; the holy scriptures, the substance of solid gospel truth contained in them. Having it, hold it fast, remember it; retain it, adhere to it. Hold that fast which thou hast heard of me. Paul was divinely inspired. It must be held fast. Faith and love must go together; it is not enough to assent to the sound words, but we must love them, believe their truth, and propagate the form of sound words in love. It must be faith and love fastening upon Jesus Christ, in and by whom God speaks to us, and we to him; by which the soul is united to Christ, and holds the truth in power and efficacy. Healing words, so it may read; there is a healing virtue in the word of God.

To the same purport is ver. 14. That good thing which was committed unto thee, keep by the Holy Ghost, which dwelleth in us. The christian doctrine is a trust committed to us; it is of unspeakable value in itself, and will be of unspeakable advantage to us; it is a good thing indeed, for it discovers to us the unsearchable riches of Christ, Eph. 3. 8. It is committed to us, to be preserved pure and entire, and to be transmitted to those who shall come after us. Yet we must not think to keep it by our own strength, but keep it by the Holy

Ghost. The Holy Ghost dwells in all real christians; they are his temples, and he enables them to keep the gospel pure and uncorrupt; in dependence on and compliance with his sacred influences. And let us beware, not only of new notions, but of new expressions, which often are used to exalt one part of religion by drawing the attention from others of equal importance. We must be careful to hold a right form of belief, in faith and love, which are in Christ Jesus; this must be sought by the power of the Holy Spirit dwelling in us, and will not be attained by those who trust in their own hearts, and lean to their own understandings.

Ver. 15—18. Having exhorted Timothy to hold fast the truths of the gospel, the apostle mentions that many disowned him in the time of distress. He mentions the constancy of one, that was Onesiphorus; he oft refreshed him with his letters, and counsels, and comforts, and he was not ashamed of him, notwithstanding the disgrace he was under. Not only at Ephesus among his own friends, but when Onesiphorus was at Rome, he sought Paul diligently, ver. 17. A good man will seek opportunities of doing good. He that receives a prophet, shall have a prophet's reward. The apostle repays him with his prayers. He prays for Onesiphorus, as well as for his house, that he might find mercy in that day, in the day of death and of judgment, when Christ will account all the good offices done to his poor members as done to himself. The day of death and judgment is an awful day. We need desire no more to make us happy, than to find mercy of the Lord in that day. The most holy of men will want mercy in that day; looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, Jude 21. And if we would have mercy then, we must seek for it now of the Lord, who gives and bestows it; for the Lord Christ has satisfied justice, that mercy might be displayed. The best we can ask, for ourselves or our friends, is, that the Lord will grant that they may find mercy of the Lord, when they must pass out of time into eternity, and appear before the judgment-seat of Christ; the Lord grant that we may find mercy of the Lord in that day. If others follow the example of Phygellus and Hermogenes,

let us copy that of Onesiphorus, ministering to the afflicted servants of Christ, in poverty and affliction, though in dungeons and workhouses, doing them all the good we can, with a constant affection for the Lord's sake. And let those who are thus comforted and relieved by their brethren, acknowledge their obligations, praying for them and all their connexions.

17. This seems to imply a more close confinement of the apostle than that mentioned Acts 28, when he dwelt in his own hired house.

CHAPTER II.

The apostle directs Timothy to the grace that is in Christ, for all spiritual strength, ver. 1. Exhorts him to perseverance with constancy and diligence, like a soldier, a combatant, and a husbandman, ver. 2—7, encouraging him hereunto by his own example, and assurances of a happy issue of his faithfulness, 8—13. Advises him to study to approve himself to God, warning him to shun vain babblings and dangerous errors, and comforts him with the thought, that the foundation of God stands sure, 14—19. Tells him that several sorts of professors are to be expected in the church, 20, 21. Charges him to flee youthful lusts, and to minister with zeal against error, but with becoming meekness of spirit, as most likely to be successful, 22—26.

Ver. 1—7. The falls of some, and the good examples of others, should excite us to be strong in the grace of Christ, and zealous in his cause. As our trials increase, we need to grow stronger and stronger in that which is good; our faith stronger, our resolution stronger, our love to God and Christ stronger. This is opposed to our being strong in our own strength; Be strong, not confiding in thy own sufficiency, but in the grace that is in Jesus Christ. As a father exhorts his son, so Paul exhorts Timothy with great tenderness and affection. Timothy must instruct others; and commit to faithful men the things which he had heard, who will sincerely aim at the glory of God, the honour of Christ, the welfare of souls, and the advancement of the kingdom of the Redeemer among men. Also they must be able to teach others. Timothy must not deliver any thing besides what St. Paul delivered to him and others, which he had received of

the Lord Jesus Christ as a trust, as a sacred deposit.

All christians, but especially ministers, must be faithful to their Captain, and resolute in his cause. Those who would approve themselves good soldiers of Jesus Christ, must endure hardness; must expect it in this world; bear it patiently when it comes, and not be moved by it from their integrity.

A soldier, when enlisted, leaves his calling that he may attend his captain's orders. If we have given up ourselves to be Christ's soldiers, we must sit loose to this world; and though while we are here we have something to do, yet we must not entangle ourselves with these affairs, so as by them to be diverted and drawn aside. The great care of a christian must be to please Christ, to approve himself to him.

If a man strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully. We are striving to get the mastery of our lusts and corruptions, to excel in that which is good, but we cannot expect the prize unless we observe the laws. We must take care that we do good in a right manner, that our good may not be spoken evil of. Some who are active, and seem to strive for the mastery, are not careful to strive lawfully; they either spend their zeal about outward forms, human inventions, and doubtful disputations, or use unholy weapons, supplied by bigotry and resentment. But those who strive lawfully shall be crowned at last.

We must be willing to wait for a recompense, ver. 6. The husbandman that laboureth, must be first partaker of the fruits. Or, The husbandman labouring first, must partake of the fruits. If we would partake of the fruits, we must labour; if we would gain the prize, we must run the race. Nor can the office of the ministry be duly exercised except by those who live upon Christ by faith themselves, as well as preach him to others. We must do the will of God, before we receive the promises, for which reason we have need of patience, Heb. 10. 36.

Timothy must be reminded to consider these illustrations about the things of God, ver. 7. Consideration is as necessary to a good conversation as to a sound conversion. It is God who gives understanding. The wisest need more of

this gift. If he who gave the revelation in the word, does not give the understanding in the heart, we are nothing. Together with our prayers for others, that the Lord would give them understanding in all things, we must exhort and stir them up to consider what they hear or read.

3. The hardships endured by roman soldiers as described by ancient writers, were very great. *Josephus* enters minutely into the particulars, and says, "So that a roman foot-soldier is but very little different from a beast of burden" *Adams* estimates the load they usually carried as amounting to 60 pounds weight, besides their arms, which were very ponderous.

6. "It becometh the husbandman to labour before he partake of the fruits."

Ver. 8-13. To encourage Timothy in suffering, the apostle reminds him of the resurrection of Christ. This is the great proof of his Divine mission, the great confirmation of the truth of the christian religion. The consideration of it should make us faithful to our christian profession, and particularly encourage us in suffering for it. Let suffering saints remember this, and look to Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith, who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despised the shame, and is now set down at the right hand of the throne of God, Heb. 12. 2. The incarnation, sufferings, and resurrection of Jesus Christ, heartily believed and rightly considered, will support a christian under all his sufferings in the present life. The gospel which related to those events, Paul preached.

To encourage Timothy he had Paul for an example, ver. 9. We must not think it strange if the best men meet with the worst treatment; but this was comfort, that the word of God is not bound. Persecuting powers may silence ministers, and restrain them, but they cannot hinder the operation of the word of God upon men's hearts and consciences: that cannot be bound by any human force. Here we see the real and true cause of his suffering trouble as an evil-doer—in or for the sake of the gospel. He willingly endured all things he was called to suffer for the sake of the elect, ver. 10, from love to them, and to be an instrument in bringing them to complete deliverance from all evil, and to the enjoyment of eternal glory, for whom Christ had shed his precious blood.

The apostle also encourages Timothy with the prospect of future happiness. If we be dead with him, we shall live with him, ver. 11. If, in conformity to Christ, we are dead to this world, its pleasures, profits, and honours, we shall be for ever with him in a better world. Nay, though we are called out to suffer for him, we shall not lose thereby.

Those who suffer for Christ, shall reign with Christ, ver. 12. But it is at our peril if we prove unfaithful to him. If we deny him before men, he will deny us before his Father, Matt. 10. 33. And that man must be forever miserable whom Christ disowns; who can consider this without trembling? This will certainly be the event, whether we believe it or not, ver. 13. If we believe not, yet He abideth faithful; he cannot deny himself. He is faithful to his threatenings, faithful to his promises; neither one nor the other shall fall to the ground, not the least jot or tittle of them. This truth as much ensures the unbeliever's condemnation, as the believer's salvation. He cannot deny himself, cannot go back from any word that he hath spoken. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but his word shall not pass away.

9. The mention of bonds, as a malefactor, would imply the apostle's being bound hand and feet in a close dungeon, a very different condition from that of his first imprisonment.

Ver. 14—19. Timothy must put those under his charge, in remembrance of what they already knew. Those disposed to strive, commonly strive about matters of small moment. But strifes of words are destructive to the things of God. If people considered of what little use most controversies in religion are, they would not be so zealous in strifes of words, to the subverting of the hearers, drawing them away from the great things of God, and occasioning unchristian heats and animosities. The care of ministers must be to approve themselves unto God, ver. 15. Ministers must be workmen, they have work to do, and must take pains; workmen that are either unskilful, or unfaithful, or lazy, have need to be ashamed. Their work is not to invent a new gospel, but rightly to divide the gospel committed to their trust. To speak terror to those to whom terror belongs, comfort to whom comfort. This expression is considered, by some, to allude to the skill

used by the priests in dividing the sacrifices according to the law.

He was to avoid the profane and vain babblings which engaged the attention of many. However frivolous they appear, they increase and produce unbelief among men professing christianity, ver. 16, and spread their evil influence, till the life and power of true religion is eaten out, as a gangrene spreads in the human body till it corrupts and destroys the whole.

The apostle mentions some who had lately advanced erroneous doctrines; they erred concerning one of the fundamental articles of the christian religion, which is truth. They did not deny the resurrection; that had been boldly and avowedly to confront the word of Christ, but they put a corrupt interpretation upon that true doctrine, saying that what Christ spake concerning the resurrection, is to be understood of a spiritual resurrection only. From thence to infer that there will not be a resurrection of the body at the last day, is false, it takes away the doctrine of a future state, overthrows the faith of christians. The apostle largely disproves this error, 1 Cor. 15. Yet nothing can be so foolish or erroneous, but it will subvert the temporary faith of some professors, for of all the delusions which have been or may be invented, there is not one that is not more congenial to the pride and lusts of men, which the simple truths of God's word oppose.

But the unbelief of men cannot make the promise of God of no effect. Though the faith of some be overthrown, yet all the attacks the powers of darkness have made upon the doctrine of Christ, cannot shake it. This foundation has two inscriptions impressed on it. One speaks our comfort—That the Lord knows them that are his, and those who are not. None can overthrow the faith of any whom God hath chosen. The other speaks our duty—That every one who names the name of Christ, must depart from iniquity. Those who would have the comfort of the privilege, must make conscience of the duty.

In this way men must seek the assurance of their calling and election: thus they should evidence the sincerity of their faith and love, and show their gratitude for distinguishing grace. Thus they will avoid the snares of deceivers, and

show the difference between themselves and mere professors. The Lord knows them as his own people, and they may know it themselves by their care to depart from iniquity, and to honour Christ by their holy conversation. Professing Christians name the name of Christ, are called by his name, and therefore are bound to depart from iniquity; for Christ gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, Tit. 2. 14.

15. An expressive image, taken from a husbandman drawing his furrow even, and cutting the ground in a direct line.—*T. H. Horne.*

19. *Bloomfield* considers the sense to be, that the main fabric itself, especially the fundamental doctrine of the resurrection, standeth firm. And that what is added may be understood of the religion, not the doctrine. He adds, "Certainly, in respect to religion, the two sentences supposed to be inscribed upon it, contain matter for serious meditation and constant recollection to all its professors."

Ver. 20, 21. The church of Christ is like a dwelling: some furniture is of great value, as gold and silver; some of small value, and put to meaner uses, as vessels of wood and earth; so it is in the church of God. Some professors of religion are like vessels of wood and earth. But all are not vessels of dishonour; there are vessels of gold and silver, that are vessels of honour, that are sanctified and meet for the Master's use. When the vessels of dishonour are consigned to destruction, these will be filled with all the fulness of God. We must see to it that we are vessels of honour; clear from corrupt opinions, sanctified for our Master's use. Every one in the church, whom God approves, will be devoted to his Master's service, and thus fit for his use. Sanctification in the heart is the preparation for every good work. The tree must be made good, and then the fruit will be good.

Ver. 22—26. Timothy was warned to avoid both the sensual indulgences to which young persons are most liable to be tempted, and the rashness and love of controversy and novelty, the desire of being distinguished, to which they are equally prone, ver. 22. He was exhorted to pursue every holy temper, and diligently to practise every good thing himself, as well as to teach them to others. The more we follow that which is good, the faster and the further we shall flee from that which is

evil. Righteousness, and faith, and love, are excellent antidotes against youthful lusts. Follow peace with them that call on the Lord. The keeping up the communion of saints, will take us from fellowship with unfruitful works of darkness. Christians are such as call on the Lord Jesus Christ, out of a pure heart.

Timothy is again cautioned against foolish and unlearned questions. Questions often appear to spring from reflection and learning, which in fact are suggested by folly, and a want of due acquaintance with God, and with man's true condition and character, ver. 23. These cause many debates and quarrels. See how often, and with what seriousness, the apostle cautions Timothy against disputes in religion; which surely shows us that religion consists more in believing and practising what God requires, than in subtle disputes. Nothing worse becomes the servant of the Lord Jesus, who was a pattern of meekness and gentleness to all. The servant of the Lord must show that he is subject to the commanding power of that holy religion, which he is employed in propagating. He must be apt to teach. Those are unapt to teach, who are apt to strive, and are fierce and froward. Ministers must be patient, bearing with evil, and in meekness instructing, ver. 25, not only those who subject themselves, but those who oppose themselves. They must be ready to instruct men in the doctrines of Christ, with clear explanations and arguments, and kind language. Those who oppose themselves to the truth, are to be instructed; for instruction, not persecution, is the scripture method of dealing with the erroneous. This is the way to convey truth in light and power, and to overcome evil with good, Rom. 12. 21. When instructing those who oppose themselves, ministers must have in view their recovery; God, peradventure, will give repentance to the acknowledging of the truth.

The same God who gives the discovery of the truth, does by his grace bring us to acknowledge it, otherwise our hearts will continue in rebellion against it. They acknowledge the truth, they confess their guilt, they cry for mercy and deliverance, they obtain pardon and grace, they are set at liberty, and walk in newness of life, and Satan

cannot regain his dominion over them. There is no "peradventure" in respect of God's pardoning those who do repent; but we cannot tell that he will give repentance to those who continue to oppose his will.

Sinners are taken in a snare, and in the worst snare, because it is the devil's; they are slaves to him. Those who repent, recover out of this snare, as a bird out of the snare of the fowler; the snare is broken, and they have escaped. When sinners repent, those who were led captive by the devil at his will, are led into the glorious liberty of the children of God, and have their wills conformed to the will of the Lord Jesus. May the good Lord recover us all out of that snare. And if any long for deliverance, let them remember they never can escape out of the snare of the devil, except by acknowledging the truth of God in the gospel, and that they never can do it without repentance. Repentance is the gift of God; and we must ask it of him by earnest, persevering prayer

26 "And being caught alive by him out of the snare of the devil, they may awake to do the will of God,"—*Blacknight*.

CHAPTER III.

The apostle foretells the rise of dangerous enemies to the truth and holiness of the gospel, ver. 1-9. Proposes his own example for Timothy's imitation, 10-13. And exhorts him to persist in the doctrines he had learned from the holy scriptures, which are divinely inspired, and every way sufficient for the noblest purposes, 14-17.

Ver. 1-5. In the last days, in gospel times, there would come perilous times, see Matt. 24. Even in gospel times there would be perilous times; on account of persecution from without, and still more on account of corruptions within. These would be times, wherein it would be difficult for a man to keep a good conscience. We are all concerned to believe and consider it, that we may not be surprised. Timothy is told what would make these times perilous, the marks and signs, whereby these times may be known. 1. Self-love, sinful self-love. Men love to gratify their own lusts, and make provision for them, more than to please God and do their duty. Instead of christian charity, which takes care for the good of others,

they will mind themselves only. 2. Covetousness. When every man is eager for what he can get, and anxious to keep what he has, this makes men dangerous to one another. 3. Pride and vain glory make the times perilous. When men, being proud of themselves, are boasters and blasphemers; when men do not fear God, they will not regard man. 4. When children are disobedient to their parents, and break through duty and gratitude, that makes the times perilous; for at what wickedness will they hesitate? 5. Unthankfulness and unholiness make the times perilous, and these commonly go together. Men are unholy and without the fear of God, because they are unthankful for the mercies of God. Ingratitude and impiety go together; call a man ungrateful, and you can call him by no worse name. Unthankful and impure, defiled with fleshly lusts. We abuse God's gifts, if we make them the food and fuel of our lusts. 6. The times are perilous when men will not be held by the bonds either of nature or common honesty, ver. 3. Natural affection is due to all. Times are perilous when children are disobedient to their parents, and also when parents are without natural affection to their children. See how sin deprives men even of the natural affection of parents to their children. And those who will not be bound by natural affection, will make no conscience of the engagements they have laid themselves under. Again, the times are perilous when men are false accusers one of another; thinking themselves at liberty to say and to do what they please, Ps. 12. 4. 7. When men have no rule over their own spirits. 8. When that which is good and to be honoured, is despised. 9. When men are generally treacherous, wilful, and haughty, ver. 4. When men are petulant and puffed up, scornful to all about them, and when this temper generally prevails, then the times are perilous. 10. When men are generally lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God, then the times are bad indeed. God is to be loved above all; that is a carnal mind, and is full of enmity against him, which prefers any thing before him, especially such sordid things as carnal pleasure. 11. All this notwithstanding, all these have the form of godliness, ver. 5, are

called by the christian name, baptized into the christian faith, make a show of religion; but, how plausible soever their form of godliness is, they deny the power of it. They assume the form of godliness, to take away their reproach; but will not submit to the power of it, to take away their sin. A form of godliness is very different from the power of it; men may have the one, and be destitute of the other, deny it practically in their lives. From such, real christians must withdraw. Such persons have been found within the outward church, in every place, and through all succeeding ages. Many such were soon perceived in the church, but matters grew worse.

The falling of a stone to the earth, is not more natural than man's propensity to turn from God. Whatever means are used to bring them to love Him and each other, they will not succeed, unless by the influence of the new-creating Spirit. And can any one think that the crimes here named are less hateful in men called christians, than they were in heathens? When any form or notion of religion is made a cloak or excuse for wilful transgressions of God's law, the danger is even greater than from men who openly cast off all regard for God.

Ver. 6—9. There ever have been artful men of all professions and parties, who, by pompous pretences and flatteries, have crept into the favour and confidence of the credulous, ignorant, and fanciful. These have taken others captive by soothing them into quietness, when laden with sins and led away with lusts. Such weak and deluded persons want a safe and comfortable religion, without self-denial and humiliation; a carnal, self-indulgent religion, which would both give ease to their consciences, and license to their sinful passions. Such also as are ever learning, running after every new teacher, and hearkening to every novel notion, continually shifting from one thing to another. In one sense we must all be ever learning, growing in knowledge, following on to know the Lord, pressing forward; but these are forward to imbibe every new notion, under pretence of advancement in knowledge, but never come to a right understanding of the truth as it is in Jesus. The apostle declares the certain stop

that should be put to their progress, ver. 8, 9; comparing them to the egyptian magicians Jannes and Jambres; whose names are found in some old jewish writers. Moses came with a Divine commission to lead Israel out of Egypt, these magicians opposed him; and thus those heretics resisted the truth, and like them were men of corrupt minds; men who had their understandings perverted, and prejudiced against the truth, and reprobate concerning the faith, very far from being true christians; but they shall proceed no further, these all will be alike in their disappointment. Though the spirit of error may be let loose for a time, Satan can deceive the nations and the churches no further and no longer than God will permit him; their folly shall be manifest, it shall appear that they are impostors, and every man shall abandon them. They cannot fatally delude the upright believer, and at length their folly shall be manifest to all men.

6. Women of mean understandings, yet easily inflamed with passionate zeal.—*Doddridge*.

Ver. 10—13. The apostle refers to his own example, ver 10. The more fully we know the doctrine of Christ and the apostles, the more closely we shall cleave to it; many sit loose to it, because they do not fully know it. Christ's apostles had no enemies but those who did not know them fully. Timothy had fully known in Paul, the doctrine he preached. Paul kept back nothing from his hearers, but declared the whole counsel of God, Acts 20. 27. Timothy had fully known his conversation; his life was consistent with his doctrine. Those ministers cannot expect to profit the people, that preach well and live ill. Timothy fully knew what was the great point Paul had in view, both in his preaching and conversation; how far it was from any worldly, carnal design, how sincerely he aimed at the glory of God, and the good of the souls of men. The apostle gave proofs of his faith in Christ, his long-suffering toward the churches to which he preached, his charity toward all men, and his patience, as Timothy well knew.

He mentions only those persecutions and afflictions which happened while Timothy was with him, ver. 11; let it be no surprise if he also suffered hard

things; out of them all the Lord delivered him. When we know the afflictions of believers only in part, they tempt us to decline the cause for which they suffer; but when we fully know how they are supported and comforted under their sufferings, then we shall be animated; especially considering that we must count upon such things, ver. 12. All who will live godly in Christ Jesus, at all times, and in all places, shall, more or less, suffer persecution. Those who will live according to the strict rules of the christian religion must expect to be despised. All who show their religion in their conversation, who not only bear the name of the crucified Redeemer, but live godly, let them expect trials of one sort or another. A form of godliness, indeed, without any direct connexion with the doctrine of faith in a crucified Saviour; or a mere profession of that faith, without the example of a godly life, may be endured and tolerated; but open profession of the truth as it is in Jesus, dependence on the atonement and grace of Christ, and resolute attention to the duties of godliness, excite the scorn and enmity of the world.

Timothy is warned of the fatal end of seducers, as a reason why he should keep close to the truth as it is in Jesus, ver. 13. As good men, by the grace of God, grow better, so bad men, through the subtlety of Satan and the power of their own corruptions, grow worse. The way of sin is down-hill; such proceed from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. Those who deceive others, deceive themselves; run themselves into more mistakes, as they will find at last, to their cost. Though it is painful to perceive that evil men and seducers wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived; yet we may rejoice that they cannot exceed their limits. The history of the outward church, through all the ages that have followed, awfully shows that the apostle spake as he was moved by the Holy Ghost.

Ver. 14—17. The apostle called on Timothy to persevere in the profession and preaching of that doctrine he had learned and assuredly believed; knowing he had received it from the Lord through his ministry, and remembering it agreed with the scriptures, with which he had been acquainted from his childhood.

It is a great happiness to know the certainty of the things wherein we have been instructed. What we have learned we must labour to be more and more assured of; that, being grounded in the truth, we may be guarded against error, for certainty in religion is of the greatest importance. Those who would acquaint themselves with the things of God, and be assured of them, must know the holy scriptures, for they are the Divine revelation. The age of children is the age to learn; and those who would get true learning, must get it out of the scriptures. The scriptures we are to know, are the holy scriptures; they came from the holy God, were delivered by holy men, contain holy precepts, treat of holy things, and were designed to make us holy, and to lead us in the way of holiness to happiness. Being called the holy scriptures, they are by that distinguished from other writings of all sorts. If we would know the holy scriptures, we must read and search them daily, as the noble Bereans. They must not lie by us neglected, seldom or never looked into. It is a sure guide in our way to eternal life. Those are wise indeed, who are wise to salvation. The scriptures will make us wise to salvation, through faith, and not otherwise, Heb. 4. 2.

We are here told, 1 What is the excellency of the scriptures. It is a Divine revelation, which we may depend upon as infallibly true. The prophets and apostles did not speak from themselves, but what they received of God that they delivered, 2 Pet. 1. 21. The scripture was given by inspiration of God, as appears by the truth, purity, and sublimity of its doctrines; the harmony of its several parts; its power and efficacy on the minds of multitudes that converse with it; the accomplishment of prophecies relating to things beyond human foresight; and the miracles wrought in proof of its Divine origin.

2. What use it will be of to us. It is profitable for all the purposes of the christian life. It instructs in that which is true, reproves for that which is amiss, directs in that which is good. It is of use to all, for all need to be instructed, corrected, and reproved.

That the man of God may be perfected, ver. 17. The christian, especially the minister, is the man of God. By the

scripture we are thoroughly furnished for every good work. There is something in the scripture suitable for every case. Whatever duty we have to do, whatever service is required from us, we may find enough in the scriptures to furnish us for it. The scripture is a perfect rule of faith and practice. If we consult the scripture, which was given by inspiration of God, and follow its directions, we shall be made men of God, perfect, and thoroughly furnished to every good work. O that we may love our Bibles more, and keep closer to them! then shall we find the benefit and advantage designed thereby, and at last attain the happiness therein promised and assured to us.

Then let us continue in the things we have learned and profess to believe, becoming more acquainted with the holy scriptures, which are able to make us wise unto salvation, by faith in Jesus Christ, who is the main subject of both Testaments. Let us reverence the whole Bible, as every sentence was given by inspiration from God, and it is profitable to instruct, reprove, correct, and guide us in the way of peace and holiness. A believing, experimental, practical knowledge of the whole scripture, renders the believer thoroughly furnished unto every good work. All religious error proceeds from objecting to or explaining away some part, or from adding human notions to God's word. We best oppose error by promoting a solid knowledge of the word of truth, and the greatest kindness we can do to children, is to make them early acquainted with the Bible. Thus we do something to continue a succession of those who are wise unto salvation, and thoroughly furnished to every good work.

16. The communicating from God to a mortal, the knowledge which could not be, or had not been obtained in any other way, by his immediate influence on the human mind, is *revelation*. The qualifying one who receives revelation to communicate the revealed knowledge to his fellow creatures, with perfect certainty and accuracy, is *inspiration*.—J. P. Smith.

17. Perfect—thoroughly instructed.

CHAPTER IV.

The apostle solemnly charges Timothy to be diligent in his ministerial work, though many will not endure sound doctrine, ver. 1-6. Enforces the charge from a consideration of his own approaching martyrdom, 6-8. Desires him to come speedily

to him, 9-13. Cautions against Alexander, and complains of such as had deserted him; but prays for them, and expresses his faith as to his own preservation to the heavenly kingdom, 14-18. And concludes with salutations and his usual benediction, 19-22.

Ver. 1-5. These repeated solemn charges of the apostle, to so zealous and faithful a minister as Timothy, show how difficult that office is to discharge. A minister's work has various parts; he is to preach the word, to reprove, rebuke, and exhort; he must spare no pains or labour, but must be urgent with men to take care of their souls and their eternal concerns. He is called on by the authority of God, and as in the presence of the Lord Jesus, who was appointed to judge the living and the dead, at his last glorious appearing, to preach the word of God, as one really in earnest. He must be unwearied in his work, in season and out of season, at stated times and occasionally, when the opportunity was more favourable or less so; to large congregations, in private circles, in obscure places, before friends or enemies, when it might be done with safety, or when it exposed him to hardship, reproach, and loss. In thus preaching, a minister is to reprove with authority the sins and negligences of professors, to rebuke those guilty of gross evils, and to intreat his hearers to attend to every part of the Divine word. In this he must patiently persevere, and apply the doctrines of the gospel in the most simple and convincing manner.

Errors and heresies were likely to creep into the church, by which many professors would be corrupted, ver. 4, 5. The time will come, when they will not endure sound doctrine. Therefore Timothy must improve the present time, when they will endure it. People must hear, and ministers must preach, for the time to come, and guard against the mischiefs likely to arise hereafter. They will turn away their ears from the truth, they will grow weary of the plain gospel of Christ, they will be greedy of fables, and take pleasure in them, and God shall give them up to delusions, because they received not the truth in the love of it, 2 Thess. 2. 11, 12. Observe, these teachers were not of God's sending; they chose them, to gratify their lusts, and to please their itching ears. People

do so when they will not endure sound doctrine, that preaching which is searching, plain, and to the purpose. There is a wide difference between the word of God and the words of such teachers; and God justly suffers those to turn to fables, who grow weary of the truth. To oppose the corrupt leaven, even then beginning to work, Timothy must watch against whatever would lead men from the simplicity of Christ. He must endure the afflictions to which his zeal and faithfulness might expose him. He was faithfully to discharge the office of an evangelist, a preacher of the gospel, where he might have access, and make full proof of his ministry by trying to the uttermost every method of doing good to the souls of men. Those who love souls must be ever watchful, must venture and endure all painful effects of their faithfulness, and take all opportunities of making known the pure gospel.

Ver. 6—8. The courage and comfort of dying saints and ministers, especially martyrs, are a great confirmation of the truth of the christian religion, and great encouragement to living saints and ministers. Paul was at Rome, and probably had particular intimations from the Spirit, that there he should seal the truth with his blood; and he looks upon it now as near at hand; I am already poured out, so it is in the original. It alludes to the pouring out the drink-offerings—the blood of the martyrs, though not a sacrifice of atonement, yet was a sacrifice of acknowledgment to the grace of God and his truths. Though probably he foresaw he must die a violent death, yet he calls it his departure or release. Death to a good man is his release from the imprisonment of this world, and his departure to the enjoyments of another world. As a christian, as a minister, he had fought a good fight, ver. 7. He had done the service, gone through the difficulties of his warfare, and had been instrumental in carrying on the victories of the Redeemer over the powers of darkness. His life was a course, and he had now finished it; as his warfare was accomplished, so his race was run. He had kept the faith, kept the doctrines of the gospel, and never betrayed any of them. Toward the end of our days to be able to speak

in this manner, what unspeakable comfort will it afford! Let it then be our constant endeavour, by the grace of God.

With pleasure the apostle looks forward to the life he was to live hereafter, ver. 8. There is a crown of life before every believer, the glory and joy of which will abundantly recompense the hardships and toils of our present warfare. This crown of righteousness was not peculiar to Paul, as if it belonged only to apostles, and eminent ministers and martyrs, but to all them also that love his appearing. All the saints love the appearing of Jesus Christ; they love his first appearing, when he appeared to take away sin by the sacrifice of himself, Heb. 9. 26, they love to think of it; they love his second appearing, and long for it: and with respect to those who love the appearing of Jesus Christ, he shall appear, to their joy. The Lord is the righteous Judge, for his judgment is according to truth. The crown of believers is a crown of righteousness, purchased by the righteousness of Christ. This crown is laid up for believers, they have it not at present, for here they are but heirs; yet it is sure, for it is laid up for them. The righteous Judge will give it to all who love, prepare, and long for his appearing. The believer therefore, amidst poverty, pain, sickness, and the agonies of death, may rejoice in the hope of the glory of God; but if the duties of a man's place and station are neglected, his evidence of interest in Christ will be obscured, while uncertainty and distress may be expected to cloud and harass his closing hours.

7, 8. The whole passage is beautifully allusive to the celebrated games and exercises of those times—*T. H. Horne.*

— This shows that the apostle looked upon his death as at hand, and evidently it was written under different prospects from those described in his first epistle.

Ver. 9—13. Here are some particular matters which Paul mentions at the closing of the epistle. He bids Timothy hasten to him, if possible, ver. 9, because several had left him. One from an ill principle; Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world. Love to this world often is the cause of apostasy from the truths and ways of Jesus Christ. Crescens was gone one way and Titus another way to their work, and only Luke was with Paul, ver. 11, 12.

He speaks respectfully concerning Mark. He is profitable to me for the ministry. It is supposed that this was Mark about whom Paul and Barnabas contended, Acts 15, 39. This teaches us a forgiving spirit. Paul bids Timothy, as he came through Troas, to bring from thence the things he had left behind him there, ver. 13, the cloak he had left there, which, it may be, Paul had the more occasion for in prison. Some read it, the roll of parchment I left at Troas. Paul was guided by Divine inspiration, and yet he would have his books. As long as we live, we must still learn. But especially the parchments; what these were Timothy would know, but we can only conjecture, and it is vain to do so.

Observe, the apostles themselves did not neglect human means, either with respect to the necessities of life, or for their own instruction.—(94.) Paul, though favoured with extraordinary degrees of Divine inspiration, set a proper value upon books, and expresses concern about their being safely conveyed to him. Let us pity the ignorance, rather than imitate the enthusiasm and madness of those who despise learning, especially in ministers of the gospel. Let us thank the Divine goodness in having furnished us with so many writings of wise and pious men in all ages; and let us endeavour, by frequently reading them, to improve our knowledge, so that our profiting may appear unto all.—(80.)

13. The mention of these articles being left at Troas, some think is an evidence that the apostle was seized in that neighbourhood, when he was taken to Rome as a prisoner the second time. Several opinions have been advanced respecting the meaning of the word rendered cloak, and there seems to be considerable doubt whether a wrapping garment, or a sort of case or portmanteau is meant.

Ver. 14—18. The apostle mentions Alexander, and the mischief he had done him, ver. 14, 15. There is as much danger from false brethren, 2 Cor. 11, 26, as from open enemies. God would reckon with him. It is a prophetic denunciation of the just judgment of God that would befall him. He appears to caution Timothy that he do not, under pretence of friendship, betray to mischief. It is dangerous having to do with those who would be enemies to such a man as Paul. He had lately been called to appear before the emperor, or the prefect, and then no

man stood with him, ver. 16, to plead his cause, to bear testimony for him, or so much as to countenance him. The Christians at Rome were forward to go and meet Paul, Acts 28, but when they would be in danger of suffering with him, then all forsook him. He prays that God would not lay it to their charge; intimating, it was a great fault; God might justly be angry with them, but he prays God to forgive them.

God gave him extraordinary wisdom and courage, and brought him from that difficulty, that he might preach the gospel, which was his business. And that all the gentiles might hear; the emperor and his court, who never would have heard Paul preach, if he had not been brought before them. And he was delivered out of the mouth of the lion, that is, of Nero, or some other judge. This signifies that he was in imminent danger. Paul improved his experiences: He that hath delivered, doth deliver, and shall yet deliver; shall deliver from every evil work, not suffering Satan to prevail against him, to cause him to do any thing inconsistent with the honour of the gospel or the good of his soul. And shall preserve to his heavenly kingdom; for this he gave praise to God, rejoicing in hope of the glory of God.

If the Lord stands by us, he will strengthen us, in a time of difficulty and danger, and his presence will more than supply every one's absence. We ought to give God the glory of all past, present, and future deliverances, instead of indulging complaints or dejection. To whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

14. This Alexander is distinguished from the person of the same name, 1 Tim. 1, 20, by the appellation of the worker in metals, or the smith. It has been considered that this latter appeared as an accuser of the apostle, but the name was so common as to give no certainty on the subject.—T. H. Horne. "The Lord will reward him" is the correct reading.

17. The tradition as recorded in ecclesiastical history is, that the result of the second hearing, or trial of the apostle, was very different from that of the first; and that Nero, enraged at the conversion of his cup-bearer, caused the apostle to be beheaded.

Ver. 19—22. The apostle salutes Aquila and Priscilla, Acts 18, 2, and the household of Onesiphorus. He mentions his leaving Trophimus sick at Miletum, ver. 20, by which it appears that though the apostles healed all manner of diseases miraculously, for the

confirmation of their doctrine, yet they did not exert that power upon their own friends. He urges Timothy to come to him before winter; the journey or voyage then would be more dangerous. He sends commendations to him from all the brethren, and concludes with a prayer, that the Lord Jesus would be with his spirit. We need no more to make us happy than to have the Lord Jesus Christ with our spirits; for in him all spiritual blessings are summed up. It is the best prayer we can put up for our friends, that the Lord Jesus Christ may be with their spirits, to sanctify and save them, and at last to receive them to himself, Acts 7. 59.

Grace be with you. Amen. This was our apostle's token in every epistle; so he wrote; The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen. 2 Thess. 3. 17, 18. And if grace be with us here, to convert and change us, to make us holy, to keep us humble, and to enable us to persevere to the end, glory will crown us hereafter. Many who believed as Paul, are now before the throne giving glory to their Lord: may we be followers of them! May the Lord Jesus Christ be with our spirits to comfort and sanctify us; may his grace be with all his people in every place.

THE EPISTLE TO TITUS.

TITUS was a greek, and an early convert of St. Paul, who took Titus with him when he went up to Jerusalem, Gal 2. 1. We find him mentioned in connexion with a subsequent journey of the apostle, and also with reference to the church of Corinth. This epistle also shows that he had been with St. Paul in Crete, and in 2 Tim 4. 10, he is mentioned as being in Dalmatia not long before the martyrdom of the apostle. There is no certain information with respect to his death. According to tradition he died in Crete at a very advanced age.

The genuineness and the authenticity of the epistle to Titus have never been doubted. It probably was written soon after the apostle's liberation from his first imprisonment.

This epistle chiefly contains instructions to Titus concerning the elders of the church, and the manner in which he should impart instruction, and in the latter part directs him to urge obedience to magistrates, to enforce good works, avoid foolish questions, and shun heresies. The instructions the apostle gave to his friends for the exercise of their office had nothing of art or subtlety, but were all plain and simple, and centered in the great design of advancing the interests of religion and the happiness of mankind. This helps to show that the christian religion was not formed to answer ambitious or interested views, but that it is the wisdom of God, and the power of God.

This epistle, in connexion with others, shows the eagerness with which the judaizing teachers propagated their erroneous doctrines, that obedience to the mosaic law was necessary to salvation, and that by this means they rendered the practice of sin consistent with the hope of being saved, encouraging men to believe that vicious practices would be pardoned by the efficacy of the Levitical sacrifices. In contradistinction to these it sets forth the free grace of God in man's salvation by Christ; and it withal shows those who have believed in God, and hope for eternal life from him, the necessity of maintaining good works.

CHAPTER I.

The apostle asserts his character, and salutes Titus, ver. 1—4. He reminds him of the work for which he had left him at Crete. Delineates the qualifications of a faithful pastor, 5—9. And describes the evil temper and practices of judaizing false teachers, who ought to be confuted, 10—16.

Ver. 1—4. Paul, a servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, ver. 1. He is described by his relation and office, serving God in the gospel of his Son, Rom. 1. 9. All are the servants of God

who are not slaves of sin and Satan. An apostle of Jesus Christ; one who had seen the Lord, and had his doctrine from him. Much divinity and devotion are comprehended in the inscriptions of the epistles. The doctrine of the apostles agreed with the faith of all the elect from the beginning of the world, and tended to promote the same. All gospel truth is according to godliness, teaching the fear of God. It is truth, not only to be known, but acknowledged; it must be held forth in word and practice. To bring to this knowledge and faith, and

to the acknowledging and profession of the truth which is after godliness, is the great end of the gospel ministry.

This is in (or for) hope of eternal life, ver. 2. The further intent of the gospel is to excite hope as well as faith; to take off the mind and heart from the world, and to raise them to heaven and the things above. The faith and godliness of christians lead to eternal life, and give hope and well-grounded expectation of it; for God, that cannot lie, hath promised it before the world began. How excellent then is the gospel, which was the matter of Divine promise so early, how much to be esteemed by us, and what thanks are due for our privileges!

God has not only promised it of old, but, ver. 3, hath in due times manifested his word through preaching, that is, made his promise which was darkly delivered of old, in the proper season before appointed, more plain by its being set forth in speech and in writing. Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God; and whose is appointed and called, must preach the word, 1 Cor. 9. 16. According to the commandment of God our Saviour; preaching is appointed by God as a Saviour. Paul therefore, as the apostle of Christ, wrote to Titus as his son in the faith, converted by his ministry, and trained up under him for the work of an evangelist. To him he wishes grace, mercy, and peace. Grace, the free favour of God, and acceptance with him. Mercy, the fruits of that favour, in the pardon of sin, and freedom from all miseries both here and hereafter. And peace, the positive effect, and fruit of mercy. Peace with God through Christ who is our Peace, and with the creatures and ourselves; outward and inward peace, comprehending all good whatsoever, that makes for our happiness in time and to eternity. Grace is the fountain of all blessings. Mercy, and peace, and all good, spring out of this. If we have God's favour, all must be well, for every blessing and comfort comes to us from God as a Father; he is the Father of all by creation, but of believers by regeneration and adoption. And the Lord Jesus Christ our Saviour as the way and the means.

Ver. 5—9. Titus had been left in Crete to set the churches in order, espe-

cially to ordain elders in every city. The character and qualification of pastors, here called elders and bishops indiscriminately, correspond to what the apostle had written to Timothy. A person who fills this office must not be under an ill character, but must have a good report; not grossly or scandalously guilty, so as to bring reproach upon the holy function. The husband of one wife, either not having divorced his wife and married another, as was too common then, even for slight causes; or he must have only one wife at once, not more, according to a sinful practice of those times. Having faithful children, obedient and good, brought up in the true christian faith, and living according to it. It is for the honour of ministers, that their children be faithful and pious, and such as recommend religion. Not accused of riot, or unuly; as having given just ground and occasion for it. Children so faithful and obedient and temperate, will be a good sign of the faithfulness and diligence of the parent, who has so educated and instructed them.

The ground of this qualification is shown from the nature of his office, ver. 7. For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God. Being such bishops and overseers of the flock, who were to be examples to them, and God's stewards to take care of the affairs of his house, to provide for and dispense to them things needful, there is great reason that they should be blameless. Else religion must suffer, their work be hindered, and souls endangered.

The prohibitions are of large extent, excluding self-opinion or overweening conceit of parts and abilities; self-love, and self-seeking, making self the centre of all; also self-confidence and trust, and self-pleasing, and disregard of others; and every thing proud, stubborn, forward, inflexible, or churlish. Not soon angry, not one of a hasty angry temper, soon and easily provoked. How unfit are those to govern a church, who cannot govern themselves, or their own turbulent and unruly passions! The minister must be meek and gentle, and patient towards all men. Not given to wine. A seasonable and moderate use of it is not unlawful; but excess therein is shameful in all, especially in a minister. No striker, not quarrelsome or contentious. Not given to filthy lucre; whereby is not meant refusing a just

return for their labours, in order to their necessary support and comfort ; but not making gain their first or chief end ; not entering into the ministry or managing it with base worldly views.

The pastor must be, ver. 8, a lover of hospitality, receiving and entertaining strangers, as the word imports, a great and necessary office of love, especially in those times of affliction and distress, when christians were made to fly from persecution, or travelled where there were not houses for their reception as in our days. And such a spirit and practice, according to ability and occasion, becomes such as should be examples of good works. A lover of good men, or of good things ; ministers should be exemplary in both ; this will evidence their piety, and likeness to God and their Master Jesus Christ. Sober, or prudent, a needful grace in a minister, one who can govern well his passions and affections. Just, giving to all their due. Holy, one who reverences God, and is of a spiritual and heavenly conversation. Temperate, who has power over his appetite and affections, can restrain them. As to doctrine, holding fast the faithful word, as he has been taught ; keeping close to the doctrine of Christ, the word of his grace, holding it fast in his own belief and profession, and in teaching others. That he be able by sound doctrine, both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers ; to exhort those who are willing to know and do their duty, and to convince them that contradict ; both which are to be done by sound doctrine, by scripture arguments and testimonies.

Ver. 10-16. False teachers are described. Unruly, headstrong and ambitious of power, refractory and untractable, impatient of good government, and of sound doctrine. Conceiting themselves to be wise, but really foolish, and thence great talkers, falling into errors and mistakes, and studious and industrious to draw others into the same. Many such there were, especially converts, as they pretended, from the jews, who yet were for mingling judaism and christianity together, and so making a corrupt medley. Their mouths must be stopped, ver. 11, but not by outward force. Titus had no such power, nor is this the gospel method ; but by show-

ing them their error, not giving place to them even for an hour. Faithful ministers must oppose seducers in good time, that, their folly being made manifest, they may proceed no further. The reasons for this are the pernicious effects of their errors. They teach things they ought not ; the necessity of circumcision, and of keeping the law of Moses ; so subverting the gospel and souls of men ; not some few only, but whole families. They had a base end in what they did ; serving a worldly interest under pretence of religion : love of money is the root of all evil. Such should be resisted, and put to shame, by sound doctrine, from the scriptures. One of themselves, Epimenides a greek poet, likely to know, and unlikely to slander them, said, The Cretians are always liars, evil beasts, slow bellies. To a proverb, they were infamous for falsehood and lying ; they were compared to evil beasts, for their savage nature ; and called slow bellies, for their laziness and sensuality, more inclined to eat than to work and live by an honest employment. Such scandalous vices as were the reproach of heathens, should be far from christians ; falsehood and lying, envious craft and cruelty, all brutal and sensual practices, and idleness and sloth, are sins condemned even by the light of nature ; for these were the Cretians taxed by their own poets.

And this witness is true, ver. 13. The apostle saw too much ground for that character. Thence, he instructs Titus to rebuke sharply. When Paul wrote to Timothy, he bade him instruct with meekness. The difference may be taken partly from the different temper of Timothy and Titus ; or rather it was from the difference of the case and people. Christian meekness is as far from cowardly connivance at sin and error, as from anger and impatience. And though there may be national differences of character, yet the heart of man in every age and place is deceitful and desperately wicked. There must in reproving be a distinguishing between sins and sins ; some are more gross and heinous in their nature, or in the manner of their commission, to the greater dishonour of God, and danger and hurt to men. some are more apt to be wrought on by gentleness, others are more hardy and stubborn, and they need more

severe language to produce remorse and shame.

That this direction might not be misconstrued, here is the end of it noted, ver. 14; that they may be effectually changed from such evil temper and manners as the Cretians in their natural state lived in, and might not regard the Jewish traditions, and superstitions of the pharisees. The sharpest reproofs must aim at the good of the reformed; and soundness in the faith is most desirable and necessary. It is a fearful judgment to be turned away from the truth; to leave the spiritual worship of the gospel for the carnal ordinances of the law, the true Divine institutions and precepts for human inventions and appointments.

To those who are defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure; they abuse and turn things lawful and good into sin. As their hearts were unholy, and their consciences erroneous, so their enjoyments and actions were corrupt and evil.

A gentile convert who lives up to the faith and precepts of christianity, is clean and pure in the sight of God; while those who presume so much upon their distinctions, render themselves incapable, by their obstinate infidelity and immoralities, to perform any acceptable service to God.—(100.)

There are many who in word and tongue profess to know God, and yet in their lives and conversations deny and reject him; their practice contradicts their profession, ver. 16. Being abominable, deserving that God and all good men should turn from them. Unpersuadable and unbelieving. They might do divers things; but it was not the obedience of faith, not what was commanded, or short of the command. To every good work reprobate, without skill or judgment to do any thing aright, having been proved and rejected. See the miserable condition of hypocrites, such as have a form of godliness, but without the power; yet let us not be so ready to fix this charge on others, as careful that it do not apply to ourselves.

12. To cretise, or imitate the Cretians, was a proverbial expression among the ancients for lying. The words poet and prophet were often used promiscuously by the Greeks and Romans. Some fragments of Epimenides have come down to us, among which is what is here quoted from a work entitled, Concerning oracles; and he seems to have been regarded as a prophet rather than a poet. *Paley* notices the similarity

of making this quotation from a Cretian poet, to the apostle's quoting a poet of their own at Athens.

CHAPTER II.

The apostle directs Titus to inculcate such duties as become sound doctrine, and to be exemplary in them, ver. 1—8. To enjoin believing servants to be obedient for the honour of the doctrine of Christ, 9, 10. And to enforce all this from a consideration of the holy design of the gospel; from the prospect it gives of heavenly glory; and from the end of Christ's death, which equally concerns believers of all ranks and stations, 11—15.

Ver. 1—8. The true doctrines of the gospel are sound doctrines; they are in themselves good and holy, and make us fit for, and vigorous in, the service of God. Ministers must be careful to teach only such truths. Thus the apostle exhorts Titus, and particularly instructs him to apply this sound doctrine to several sorts of persons. Old disciples of Christ must conduct themselves in every thing agreeably to the christian doctrine. That the aged men be sober; not thinking that the decays of nature will justify them in any inordinacy or intemperance; but seeking comfort from a nearer communion with God, and not from any undue indulgence. They should be composed and grave; levity and vanity in behaviour is most unbecoming at their years! Temperate, governing well their passions and affections. Sound in the faith, sincere and stedfast, constantly adhering to the truth of the gospel, not ready to run into corrupt opinions or parties. Faith works by, and must be seen in love, sincere love, without dissimulation; love of God for himself, and of men for God's sake. And in patience. Aged persons are apt to be peevish and fretful; therefore need to be on their guard against such infirmities and temptations.

The aged women likewise must be instructed and warned: women are to hear and learn their duty from the word, as well as the men. Though express scripture does not occur for every word, or look, or fashion in particular; yet there are general rules, according to which all must be ordered. And whatsoever things are becoming or unbecoming holiness, form a measure and

rule of conduct. Not false accusers, no calumniators or sowers of discord, slandering and backbiting their neighbours. Not given to much wine; not addicted thereto, under the power and mastery of it. Those whose actions and behaviour become holiness, thereby teach good things; and they may and should also teach by doctrinal instruction at home. There are lessons for young women also, in which the aged women must instruct them in the duties of religion according to their years.

Young women must learn to be sober and discreet; many expose themselves to fatal temptations by what at first might be but indiscretion. Chaste, and keepers at home, are well joined together. Their business is to guide the house, and they should give no occasion to the enemy to speak reproachfully. Good, generally, in opposition to all vice; and specially in their place, kind, helpful and charitable; of a meek and yet cheerful spirit and temper. To love their husbands, and obey them; where there is true love, this will not be difficult. To love their children, not with natural affection only, but spiritual; a love springing from a holy sanctified heart, and regulated by God's word. Not a fond foolish love, indulging them in evil, neglecting due reproof and correction; but a regular christian love, taking care of their souls as well as of their bodies. The reason is added—that the word of God may not be blasphemed. Failures in relative duties would be greatly to the reproach of christianity.

Here is the duty of young men; they are apt to be eager and thoughtless, therefore must be earnestly called upon and exhorted to be considerate, sober-minded, avoiding all youthful lusts and vanities, and attending to their duties in the fear of God. Also humble and mild; there are more young people ruined by pride than by any other sin.

Ministers must be examples to the flock, for teaching and doctrine, as well as for life. They must make it appear that the design of their preaching is to advance the honour of God, the interest of Christ and his kingdom, and the welfare and happiness of souls; that this office was not entered into, or used from ambition or covetousness, but with a pure aim at the spiritual ends of its institution. In their preaching there-

fore sound speech must be used, which cannot be condemned; scripture language expressing scripture truths, being made the foundation of practical exhortations. As a christian, to be grave serious, and edifying, in conversation; the life corresponding with the doctrine.

Opposition and calumny perhaps may not be escaped; men of corrupt minds will resist the truth, and often reproach the preachers and professors of it; but let them see, that with well-doing they put to silence the ignorance of foolish men; that when they speak evil of them as evil-doers, they may be ashamed who falsely accuse their good conversation in Christ.

Ver. 9, 10. Servants must not think they are discharged from serving God. They must know and do their duty to their earthly masters, with a reference to their heavenly one. There must be respect and reverence in the mind and thoughts. This duty results from the will of God, and the relation in which, by his providence, he has put us, not from the quality of the person. Servants therefore are to be obedient to their own masters. And to please them well, in all things not contrary to the will of their great and superior Lord. In serving the earthly master according to Christ's will, He is served; such shall be rewarded by him accordingly.

Not answering again; not contradicting or disputing; not giving disrespectful or provoking language; to take a check or reproof with silence, not making confident or bold replies. When conscious of a fault, to palliate or justify it doubles it. Yet this not answering again does not exclude turning away wrath with a soft answer, when season and circumstances admit. Not purloining; never converting to their own use that which is their master's, nor wasting the goods they are intrusted with. They must be just and true, and do for them as they would or should for themselves, being satisfied with the provision allotted them, and not countenancing any waste and embezzlement. Having a light thought as to taking beyond what is right, though it be from a parent or master, is likely to harden conscience to go further: it is both wicked in itself, and it tends to more. Showing all good

fidelity ; not only not to steal or waste, but to improve a master's goods, and promote his prosperity and thriving to the utmost. This is the way to bring a blessing, as the contrary often brings utter ruin. If ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own? Luke 16. 12. Thus of the duties themselves, to which servants are to be exhorted.

Then here is the consideration with which Titus was to enforce them ; That they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things ; that they may recommend the gospel and Christ's holy religion by faithful conduct. Unbelieving masters would think the better of the despised way, every where spoken against when they found that their servants, who were christians, were better than other servants ; more obedient and submissive, more just, faithful, and diligent. True religion is an honour to the professors of it ; and they should adorn it in all that they are able. Our light must shine among men, so that they, seeing our good works, may glorify our Father who is in heaven.* This is an argument all can understand, and the same observation is applicable to all our relative and social conduct.

Ver. 11—15. The nature and design of the gospel, requires all to do their respective duties, that is the aim and object of christianity. They are put under the dispensation of the grace of God, so the gospel is called, Eph. 3. 2. It is grace in respect of the free favour and good-will of God ; and the love of Christ constrains us not to live to self, but to him, 2 Cor. 5. 14, 15. This gospel grace brings salvation : it reveals and offers it, and ensures it to believers ; salvation from sin and wrath, from death and hell. And the neglectors of this grace of God, bringing salvation now, will be more inexcusable, since it hath appeared, or shone out, more clearly than ever before. For it hath appeared to all men. The publication of it is free and general. The doctrine of grace and salvation by the gospel is for all ranks and conditions of men. This gospel revelation directs what to shun, and what to follow ; what to avoid, and what to do. It teaches,

1. To abandon sin ; Denying ungodliness, and worldly lusts ; to renounce

and have no more to do with these. An earthly sensual conversation suits not a heavenly calling.

2. To make conscience of that which is good. To live soberly, with respect to ourselves, keeping the limits of moderation and temperance ; righteously towards all men ; doing good to others, according to our ability, and their need. And godly toward God, in the duties of his worship and service. Personal and relative duties must be done from principles of holy love and fear, loving, fearing, and trusting in God, depending on him, and devoting ourselves to him ; praying to him, and praising him, meditating on his word and works, as he has manifested himself in Christ. We must look to God in Christ as the object of our hope and worship. A gospel conversation must needs be a godly conversation. See our duty comprised in a very few words, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, and living soberly, righteously, and godly. The grace of God teaches men to live after this manner in this present world, notwithstanding all its snares, temptations, corrupt examples, and the ill usage to be expected by those who will live godly in Christ Jesus ; and the remaining power of sin in the believer's heart, with all their manifold infirmities and hinderances.

3. It teaches in all to look for the glories of another world. Hope is put for the thing hoped for, that is, heaven and the happiness thereof, called that hope, because it is the great thing we look and wait for ; and a blessed hope, because, when attained, we shall be completely happy for ever. And the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ. This denotes both the time of the accomplishing our hope, and the suaveness and greatness of it. This will be at the second appearing of Christ, when he shall come in his own glory, and in his Father's, and of the holy angels, Luke 9. 26. His first coming was in a low estate, to satisfy justice, and purchase salvation ; his second will be in majesty, to invest his people with it. The great God, even our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Christ is the mighty God, Isa. 9. 6. Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, Phil. 2. 6. In his second coming he will reward his servants, and bring them to glory with

him. At, and in, the glorious appearing of Christ, will the blessed hope of christians be attained. Let us then look to this hope, like those who wait for our Lord. The day or hour we know not, but He that shall come, will come, and will not tarry, Heb. 10. 37. The comfort and joy of christians are, that their Saviour is the great God, and will gloriously manifest himself at his second coming. Were he not thus the great God, he could not be their Saviour or their Hope.

Christian duties are also enforced from the end of Christ's death, ver. 14; Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. To bring us to holiness and happiness was the end of Christ's death. Jesus Christ, that great God and our Saviour, who saves not simply as God, much less as Man alone; but as God-man, two natures in one person. The price of our redemption; He gave himself; the Father gave him, but he gave himself also; and in the freeness as well as the greatness of the offering, consists the acceptableness of it, John 10. 17, 18. He was the Priest and Sacrifice also. We are redeemed, not with silver and gold, but the precious blood of Christ, 1 Pet. 1. 18, 19, called the blood of God, Acts 20. 28; of him who is God.

This was for us, for poor perishing sinners, gone off from God, and rebels against him. He gave himself for us, not only for our good, but in our stead. He suffered the Just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, 1 Pet. 3. 18. He was made Sin for us, an Offering and Sacrifice for sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him, 2 Cor. 5. 21. He loved us, and gave himself for us; what can we do less than love and give up ourselves to him? Especially considering the ends of his giving himself for us; that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and ungodliness and worldly lusts. Christ gave himself to redeem us from these; therefore put them away. To love and live in sin, is to trample under foot redeeming blood, to despise and reject its greatest benefits. Christ died to purify, as well as to pardon; to heal the nature, as well as to free from guilt and condemnation. He makes to himself a peculiar people, by purifying them. Redemption

from sin, and sanctification of the nature go together, and both make a peculiar people unto God who are free from guilt and condemnation, and from the power of lusts, and purified by the Holy Spirit. And not conformed to the fashions of this world, but zealous of good works. The gospel is not a doctrine of licentiousness, but of holiness and good life. We are redeemed from a vain conversation, to serve God in holiness and righteousness all the days of our life. Let us see then that we do good, and are zealous in it; only looking that zeal is guided by knowledge and spirited with love, directed to the glory of God, and always in some good thing.

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness; to teach sound doctrine, to convince of sin, and refute error, to reform the life, and to carry forward in what is just and good, that the man of God, whatever his station, may be perfect, thoroughly furnished to all good works, that are to be practised by himself, or to be taught others. Here is what will furnish for all parts of duty, and the right discharge of them. These things speak, or teach; shun not to declare the whole counsel of God—the great and necessary truths and duties of the gospel, especially, these press with much earnestness. Ministers must not be cold and lifeless in delivering heavenly doctrine and precepts, as if they were indifferent or of little concern; but they must urge them with earnestness suitable to their nature and importance. Speak and exhort these things; with boldness and faithfulness reprove sin, and carefully look to thyself and thy own conduct, then none will despise thee, ver. 15. The most effectual way for ministers to secure themselves from contempt, is, to keep close to the doctrine of Christ; imitate his example; and do their duty with prudence and courage. Acting thus, with prudence, firmness, and faithfulness, no one might treat Titus or his words with contempt, without evidently despising Christ who sent him.

Let us inquire whether our whole dependence is placed upon that grace which saves the lost, pardons the guilty, and sanctifies the unclean. Whether we are

daily following after holiness, and practising all our duties to God and man, in expectation of Christ's coming to be our Judge, patiently continuing in well doing, while we look for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, even our Saviour Jesus Christ, to number us with his saints in glory everlasting? The more evidently we are redeemed from all iniquity, and purified unto Christ as a peculiar people, zealous of good works, the clearer will be our evidence of an interest in his salvation. And the further we are removed from boasting of imaginary good works or trusting in them, so that we glory in Christ alone, the more zealous shall we be to abound in real good works, performed in an upright, humble, believing manner, to the glory of our Lord, and the good of mankind, and secure from the contempt of all except the avowed despisers of Christ, and of his free salvation.

13. "The glorious appearing of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ."—*G. Sharp*. This interpretation was the only one ever set forth in all the ancient churches.—*Wordsworth*. Christ must be the God here spoken of, because it is his glorious appearing which all christians here are said to expect; but of God the Father we are expressly told that Him no man hath seen or can see.—*From Bloomfield*.

CHAPTER III.

The apostle directs obedience to civil magistrates, and becoming behaviour towards all men, ver. 1, 2. Enforces these from what believers were before conversion, and what they are made, through Jesus Christ, by regenerating and justifying grace, 3—7. He puts Titus upon urging these things, that good works may be practised by believers, and useless disputes avoided, 8, 9. Heretics to be rejected after due admonition, 10, 11. Desires that he would bring Zenas and Apollon with him, to Nicopolis; recommends good works 12—14. And concludes with a benediction, 15.

Ver. 1, 2. Titus was to remind the Cretians to obey those principalities and powers, or governors whom the providence of God placed over them. Spiritual privileges do not make void or weaken, but confirm and strengthen the obligations of civil duties. And to be ready to every good work, doing good of all kinds, and on every occasion that may offer, whether respecting God, ourselves, or our neighbour; what may bring credit to religion in the world, Phil. 4. 8.

Mere good words and good meanings only, are not enough without good works. And to speak evil of no man. If no good can be spoken, say nothing rather than speak evil unnecessarily. We must never take pleasure in speaking ill of others, or make the worst of any thing, but the best that we can.

To be no brawlers; not quarrelsome contentious persons, apt to give or return ill and provoking language. Christians must follow the things that make for peace, as becomes the servants of the God of peace and love. Being gentle, equitable, and just, not taking words or actions in the worst sense; and showing all meekness to all men. All meekness, meekness in all instances and occasions, not toward friends only, but to all men, though still with wisdom, James 3. 13.

Ver. 3—7. Recollections of our past condition should abate pride, and work pity and hope in reference to those yet unconverted. We ourselves also were sometimes foolish, ver. 3; without true spiritual understanding and knowledge, ignorant of heavenly things. Disobedient; what folly like this, to disobey God and his laws, natural or revealed! Deceived, or wandering out of the ways of truth and holiness. Man in his degenerate state is compared to a lost sheep; that must be sought out, brought back, and guided in the right way, Psa. 119. 176. Serving divers lusts and pleasures; as vassals and slaves. How different the notion God's word gives of a sensual life from what the world generally has! God's word calls it servitude. Carnal people think they enjoy their pleasures: but they are mere drudges and bond-slaves. So far are they from freedom and happiness in them. The servants of sin have many masters, their lusts hurrying them different ways; pride commands one thing, covetousness another. What vile slaves are sinners, while they fancy themselves free! The lusts that tempt them, promise them liberty, but in yielding, they become the servants of corruption; for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought into bondage. Living in malice; desiring evil to others, and rejoicing therein. "And envy; which grudges at another's good, frets at his prosperity and success in any thing: both roots of bitterness, whence many

evils spring; evil thoughts and speeches, tongues set on fire of hell, detracting from, and impairing the just and due praises of others. They had lived in malice and envy, from the various competitions and resentments, to which their eager pursuit of worldly objects, and their pride of heart gave rise.

Thus they were hateful, deserving to be hated. And hating one another. Those who live allowedly in sin, are hateful. Their temper and ways are so. It is the misery of sinners, that they hate one another, as it is the duty and happiness of saints to love one another. The consideration of its having been thus with believers, should dispose them to be more gentle and tender-hearted toward such. This is the argument from their past condition here described. And we are delivered out of that our miserable condition by no merit or strength of our own, but only by the mercy and free grace of God, the merit and sufferings of Christ, and the operation of his Spirit; therefore believers are not to contemn those yet unconverted, or be wearied out by their misconduct; but rather pity them, and cherish a hope concerning them, that they yet may obtain mercy.

1. We have here the first great Author of salvation. God the Father, is termed here God our Saviour. All things belonging to the new creation, and recovery of fallen man are of God the Father, as the contriver and beginner of this work, 2 Cor. 5. 18. He is the Father of Christ, and through him the Father of mercies; all spiritual blessings are by Christ from him, Eph. 1. 3.

He is the fountain from which the Holy Spirit flows, for the instruction, regeneration, and salvation of his fallen creatures; and this blessing is derived to mankind through Christ.—(100)

2. The spring and rise of it, is the kindness and love of God to man. By grace we are saved from first to last. Let us acknowledge this, and give him the glory of it; not abusing it, but turning it to thankfulness and obedience.

For let us consider what we ourselves were when God showed us favour.—(72.)

3. Here is the means, or instrumental cause; the shining out of this love and grace of God in the gospel, that is, in the word. The appearing of love and grace has, through the Spirit, great virtue to soften and change and turn the

heart to God. Thus God is asserted to be the Author, his free grace the spring, and the manifestation of this in the gospel, the means of salvation; that the honour of all still may be the better secured to him. 4. False grounds and motives are here removed. Not by works of righteousness, which we have done, but according to his mercy, he saved us; by his own free grace and mercy alone. Works must be in the saved, but not among the causes of their salvation; they are the way to the kingdom, not the meriting price of it; all is undeserved favour and mercy from first to last. By grace ye are saved, through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God. Faith and all saving graces are God's free gift and works; the beginning, increase, and perfection of them in glory, all are from him. Thus the true cause is shown, and the false removed. 5. The beginning of salvation, is in regeneration or spiritual renewing, as it is here called. It is the same man, but with other dispositions and habits; evil ones are done away, as to their prevalence at present; and all remains of them will be so, when the work shall be perfected in heaven. A new prevailing principle of grace and holiness is wrought, which inclines, sways, and governs, and makes the man a new man, a new creature. Salvation is begun, and will be growing and increasing to perfection; therefore it is said, He saved us. How few mind this! Most pretend, they would have heaven at last, yet care not for holiness now; they would have the end without the beginning. 6. Here is the outward sign and seal thereof in baptism, called therefore the washing of regeneration. The work itself is inward and spiritual; but this is outwardly signified and sealed in this ordinance. Water is of a cleansing and purifying nature, does away the filth of the flesh, and so was suited to signify the doing away of the guilt and defilement of sin, by the blood and Spirit of Christ. Slight not this outward sign and seal; yet rest not in the outward washing, but look to the answer of a good conscience, without which the external washing will avail nothing. 7. Here is the principal efficient, or worker therein—the Spirit of God; it is the renewing of the Holy Ghost: not

excluding the Father and the Son; nor the use of means, the word and sacraments, by which the Spirit works. Through his operation they have their saving effect. In salvation, the applying and effecting part is especially attributed to the Holy Spirit. We are said to be born of the Spirit; to be quickened and sanctified by the Spirit; to be led, guided, strengthened, and helped by the Spirit. Through him we mortify sin, perform duty, walk in God's ways; all the acts and operations of the divine life in us, the works, and fruits of righteousness without us, all are through this blessed and holy Spirit, who is called the Spirit of life, grace, and holiness; all grace is from him. Earnestly is he to be sought, and greatly to be heeded by us, that we quench not his holy motions, nor resist him in his workings. Grieve not therefore the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed to the day of redemption, Eph. 4. 30. The Spirit seals by his renewing and sanctifying, his witnessing and assuring work; he distinguishes and marks out for salvation, fits for it, it is his work: we could not turn to God by any strength of our own, any more than we could be justified by any righteousness of our own. 8. Here is the manner of God's communicating this Spirit in gifts and graces, most freely and plentifully. The church has had a measure of the Spirit in all ages, but more in gospel times than before. The law came by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ, fulfilling the promises and the prophecies of old, Isa. 41. 3. 9. Here is the procuring cause of all; Through Jesus Christ our Saviour. The Spirit and his saving gifts and graces, all come through Christ, as a Saviour, whose undertaking and work it is to bring to grace and glory. He is our righteousness and peace, and our Head, from whom we have all spiritual life and influences. Let us praise God for him above all; let us account all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of him, and seek to grow and increase therein more and more. 10. Here are the ends to be attained by this new spiritual condition. That, being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. Justification in the gospel sense is the free remission of a sinner, accepting him as righteous through the

righteousness of Christ received by faith. In it there is removing guilt that bound to punishment, and accepting and dealing with the person as one that is righteous in God's sight. This God does freely as to us, yet through the intervention of Christ's sacrifice and his righteousness, laid hold upon by faith, Rom. 3. 22. God, in justifying a sinner in the way of the gospel, is gracious to him, and yet just to himself and his law; forgiveness being through a perfect righteousness, and satisfaction made to justice by Christ, who is the propitiation for sin, and not merited by the sinner himself.

Let us not trust in our own righteousness, but in Christ's righteousness alone, received by faith for justification and acceptance with God. We must have fruits in works of obedience; not as our justifying righteousness before God, but as fruits of our justification, and evidences of our interest in Christ, but the procuring of all this is by Christ; without such justification there can be no adoption and sonship, and so no right of inheritance. Eternal life is set before us in the promise, the Spirit works faith in us, and hope of that life; faith and hope bring it near, and fill with joy in the well-grounded expectation of it. The meanest believer has good hope through grace, and may bear up under all difficulties; he is waiting for an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for him. How well may such comfort themselves with these words! All this gives good reason why believers should show all meekness to all men, because they have experienced so much benefit by the kindness and love of God to us, and may hope that others in God's time, will be partakers of the same grace as themselves. Seeing all these hopes and privileges are conferred wholly by the mercy of God, contrary to our own deserts, surely we are to be followers of God in our conduct towards our brethren and neighbours.

5. Baptism is a sign of our regeneration, which is wrought by the Holy Ghost.—*Bishops' Bible.*

5-7. Here is use made of almost every word whereby the exceeding rich grace, kindness, mercy and goodness of God may be expressed, all concurring in this work. He exercises all these properties and attributes of his nature towards us, that he may save us, and in bestowing them, giving us the Holy Ghost,

A very moving description of him out, as water out of a ver. 1—3, and stop or hesitation, and that not of joy and pleasure, but richly and in abundance faith, as to the work itself, it is emphatically justified by the grace of him who is all the said—*Owen*.

among the not by washing the infant that the a most produced.—*Doddridge*. Not because passioning in the nature of the baptized person together, induced by baptism, but because it is an movem of the purification of his soul from sin. *Phy* he real change in the nature of a believer, which entitles him to be called a son of God, is not effected by baptism, but by the renewing of the Holy Ghost.—*Macknight*.

— "The washing of regeneration," that "new birth of the Spirit," of which "the laver" of baptism was the sacramental sign, but nothing more.—*T. Scott*.

This not only washed the heart from the prevailing love and pollution of sin, but made way for the renewal of the soul to the Divine image by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Ver. 8—11. When the grace of God towards mankind has been opened, the necessity of good works is immediately pressed. This is a true christian doctrine of highest importance, which ministers must earnestly and constantly press; that they who have believed in God, bring forth the fruit of righteousness, make it their care to maintain good works, not to do them occasionally only, but to seek opportunities for doing them, being influenced by love and gratitude, and encouraged by the promises of the gospel to abound in them. For though the things before stated in practical admonitions could not justify sinners before God, yet they were good in themselves and profitable to men, in respect of their temporal and eternal interests.

But frivolous and foolish questions must be avoided, and subtle nice distinctions and vain inquiries as to genealogies. These matters, and the contests and angry disputes of the jewish teachers, about the mosaic law and the obligations of its ceremonies, were wholly unprofitable under the christian dispensation, and only occupied men with vain reasonings which took them off from the great doctrines and duties of christianity. Ministers must shun and oppose what would corrupt the faith, and hinder godliness and good works; nor should people have ears eager after novelties, but love and embrace sound doctrine which tends most to the use of edifying.

He who forsakes the truth as it is in Christ Jesus, sets forth false doctrines, propagates them to the corrupting of the faith, and breaks the peace of the

church about them; let such a one be rejected, ver. 10. Admonish him, that, if possible, he may be brought back, and thou mayest gain thy brother; but if this does not succeed, that others be not hurt, cast him out of the communion. Those who will not be reclaimed by admonitions, but are obstinate in their sins and errors, are subverted and self-condemned. A heretic, in the scripture sense of the word, seems to have meant a professed christian, who obstinately denied and opposed some fundamental doctrine of the gospel, as taught by the apostles; especially if he were earnest to propagate his notions, from a vain desire of being the head of a party, and so made divisions in the church. Such are turned aside from Christ, the foundation, by the artifices of Satan, and condemned of themselves; as the avowal of such heresies renders further proof unnecessary. He was not to be considered a christian, nor allowed to continue in the communion of the church. But observe, the proceedings of the church with heretics must be persuasive and rational, they must be admonished, instructed, and warned. Here is no warrant for persecution. And though we must not strive about words, or magnify every difference of opinion into heresy, we must watch against fundamental errors which are inconsistent with the life of faith in the Son of God, and of grateful obedience to him.

Ver. 12—15. Titus was to be ready to come to Paul at Nicopolis, a city of Thrace, as soon as others were sent to Crete, to supply his place. Tychicus is mentioned on many occasions with respect. Another personal charge to Titus, is, that he would bring two of his friends on their journey, and see that nothing should be wanting to them. This was from respect both to them and the work they were about. Zenas is styled the lawyer, whether in reference to the roman or the mosaic law is doubtful. Apollos was an eminent and faithful minister.

Let christians learn to maintain good works, ver. 14, especially such as supporting ministers in the work of preaching and spreading the gospel. Christianity is not a fruitless profession; the professors of it must be filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by

Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God. It is not enough that they are harmless; they must be profitable, doing good, as well as refraining from evil. Let "our's" maintain some honest labour and employment, to provide for themselves and their families. Christianity lays an obligation to seek some honest work and calling, therein to abide with God. This is of good report, will credit religion, and be good to 'mankind: they will not be unprofitable members of the body, or burdensome and chargeable to others, but enabled to help those in want. Those who exhort others to good works must show them in their own conduct; and set a decided and manifest example on necessary occasions.

The apostle concludes with salutations and benedictions. All with Paul testify their love and good wishes to Titus, owning him in his work, and encouraging him therein. It is a great comfort and encouragement to have the heart and prayers of other christians with and for us. Greet them that love us in the faith, or for the faith; who are

our loving fellow-christ, or the image of God received by and gives strength to aliguit that and is itself the best. Greeting you all, Amen. This is the that benediction, not to Titus alone, God the faithful with him; which she in-though the epistle bears the single his of Titus in the inscription, yet it wh, the use of the churches there, and t. were in the mind and upon the heart of the apostle, in writing it. Grace be with you all, the love and favour of God, with the fruits and effects thereof, according to need; spiritual ones, especially, and the increase and feeling of them more and more in your souls. This is the apostle's wish and prayer, showing his affection to them, his desire of their good, and would be a means of obtaining for them, and bringing down upon them the thing requested. Observe, Grace is the chief thing to be wished and begged for, with respect to ourselves or others; it is itself "all good." Amen, closes the prayer, expressing desire and hope, that so it may be, and so it shall be.

THE EPISTLE TO PHILEMON.

PHILEMON was an inhabitant of Colosse, a person of some note and wealth, and a convert under the ministry of St. Paul. This epistle was written, probably, during his first imprisonment, and sent with the epistle to the Ephesians and Colossians. It is a letter to an individual, but always has been considered a part of the sacred canon, and several of the doctrines and precepts of christianity are expressed in it, directly or indirectly. Also, this epistle sets forth a most glorious proof of the good effects of christianity, when rightly understood and sincerely embraced. A worthless slave and thief is transformed into a pious, virtuous, amiable, and useful man; he is made happier and better in himself, and in all his circumstances and relations of life. *Benson* rightly says, Men would do well to examine it carefully, before they reject it or speak slightly of it.

From the contents we learn that Onesimus was the slave of Philemon, whom he is thought to have robbed. Having run away from his master, he went to Rome, where he was converted to the christian faith, by the word as set forth by Paul, who retained him till his conduct confirmed the truth and sincerity of his conversion. He wished to repair the injury he had done to his master, but fearing the punishment his offence deserved might be inflicted, he entreated the apostle to write to Philemon.—And he seems no where to reason more exquisitely, or to entreat more forcibly, than in this epistle.

St. Paul here intercedes for Onesimus with much mildness of expression, and much warmth of affection, and delicacy of address, urging Philemon to esteem him and confide in him as a sincere christian. Desirous also to enable Onesimus to appear in the family with his lost character partly restored, the apostle offers to compensate for the injury done to his master.

We are not informed as to the result of this application, but the epistle having been preserved by the primitive christians, and placed in the sacred canon, induces the belief that the request it contains was attended to. The whole of this epistle is a most beautiful and touching composition. Every word has force and propriety, and if compared with any uninspired composition, however earnest and affecting, the difference is very striking. As *Atterdill* says, A diamond may be little, yet of great price. *Faley* remarks upon the singular correspondence between this epistle, and that to the Colossians. Though the subject did not lead to treat so directly of the doctrines or precepts of christianity in this as in the other epistles, yet we meet with several allusions to different parts of the christian plan, interwoven in an easy and natural manner with the rest of the letter.

A very moving and endearing salutation, ver. 1—3, and most affectionate expressions of joy and praise, on account of Philemon's steady faith in the Lord Jesus, and love to all the saints, and particularly to the poor among them, 4—7. The apostle, then, with a most obliging address, opens the compassionate design of his letter, and puts together a variety of well-adjusted, and moving topics, to recommend Onesimus to Philemon's kind regards, and engage him to accept of the return of his penitent fugitive, who would now make him rich amends for the misconduct of which he had formerly been guilty; and on behalf of whom the apostle promises to make up any loss which Philemon had sustained by him, 8—22. He then concludes with salutations, and a benediction, 23—25.

Ver. 1—3. The apostle did not write authoritatively to Philemon, therefore he only styles himself prisoner of Jesus Christ, which would tend to procure affectionate regard to his requests, and Timothy is joined that the united desire of brethren might be presented. Philemon is addressed as a fellow-labourer, implying his diligence in the cause of Christ. Apphia probably was his wife. Justice and prudence would direct Paul to this express notice of her. Archippus Col. 4. 17, is thought to have been his son. Philemon's house is addressed as a church; and Paul directs to them all: that in their way and place they might further the reconciliation wished and sought. How desirable it is, that all in a family should be well affected towards one another, for furthering the benefit of all. The apostle expressed his pious good will by his usual benediction. Faith in Christ, and love to him, should unite saints more closely than any outward relation can unite the people of the world.

Ver. 4—7. Paul, in his private thanksgivings and prayers, was particular in remembering his friends; I thank my God, making mention of thee in my prayers. This is a means of exercising love, and obtaining good for others. Always, usually, not once or twice only, but frequently. We must remember christian friends much and often, as their cases may need, bearing them in our thoughts, and upon our hearts, before our God. He thanks God for his love and faith; even his faith toward the Lord Jesus, and his love to

all saints for his sake. Different sentiments and ways in what is not essential, will not make difference of affection, as to the truth. Mere outward differences are nothing here. He inquired concerning his friends, as to the truth, growth, and fruitfulness of their graces, their faith in Christ, and love to him and to all the saints. The apostle desired that the fruits of Philemon's faith and love, might be more and more conspicuous, so that the communication of them might constrain others to acknowledge the good that was in him and in his house toward Christ Jesus. He adds a reason, both for his prayer and praises, ver. 7. The good which Philemon did, was abundant matter of joy and comfort to him and others, who therefore desired that he would continue and abound in such good fruits, more and more, to God's honour and the credit of religion.

6. True it is, faith and love are always joined in one christian; they are required to perfect him, and to bring him to salvation. Thus faith is necessary, hope is necessary, charity is necessary, they must all meet together in the same person, so that no believer must be without any of them. Nevertheless, howsoever they are joined, and must be joined, in the practice of a christian life, yet they are not joined, and cannot be joined in the act and article of justification, as some would allege. The eye in the head alone seeth, not the ear, nor the mouth, nor the tongue, yet it is never alone in the head, but joined with others. We do not separate faith and good works from the exercise of a christian man's life, but in the office of justification, and acquitting us in the presence of God. Faith in her office is alone, as love likewise is in her's; but in our practice and in our persons they must be joined. A princess, although in her estate and throne she is alone, yet she goes not without her train and maids of honour attending upon her. Neither do we ascribe our justification to faith for itself, or as it is a work and quality in us—it is not our justification in whole or part, but because it is the means or instrument to apprehend and receive the mercies of God, the merits of Christ, and the sufferings of the gospel.—*Atterdell*.

Ver. 8—14. Paul considered that he might with propriety and safety have enjoined Philemon, in the name of Christ, to do what evidently was so conformable to the spirit of christianity, yet in the present case he besought him from the love of Christ to them, and their love to him and each other through him. He reminded him that this was the supplication of Paul the aged, then enduring the hardships of imprisonment in the cause of Christ. It is no

disparagement to be condescending, and sometimes even to beseech, where, in strictness of right, we might command; so does the apostle here; he entreats where he might enjoin, he argues from love rather than authority.

He proceeds to state, ver. 10, that his petition was not for himself, but in behalf of one of whom he speaks with the affection of a father, one converted through his means during his imprisonment, and this was Onesimus.

In allusion to that name, which signifies profitable, the apostle allows that in time past he had been unprofitable to Philemon, but without dwelling upon his faults, he hastens, ver. 11, to mention the change which had taken place, by which he had become profitable both to Paul and to Philemon. He had been serviceable to the apostle, and was likely now to be a useful servant to his Master. Unsanctified persons are unprofitable persons; they answer not the great end of their being and relations. What happy changes conversion makes! of evil, good; of unprofitable, useful. Religious servants are treasures in a family. Such will make conscience of their time and trusts, promoting the interests of those whom they serve, and managing all they can for the best. This is the argument here urged; It will now be for thy advantage to receive him; thus changed, thou mayest expect him to be a dutiful and faithful servant, though in time past he was not so.

The apostle had enjoined Onesimus to return home, and requested Philemon to receive him as his spiritual child. He would gladly have kept Onesimus at Rome to minister to him, as he knew Philemon would willingly have allowed him to do so, but he would not do this without the master's consent, lest the benefit should seem to be extorted. No prospect of usefulness should induce any to counsel neglect of relative obligations, or to fail in obedience to their superiors. One great evidence of true repentance consists in returning to practise duties which have been neglected. In his unconverted state Onesimus had withdrawn to his master's wrong; but now that he had seen his sin and repented, he was willing and desirous to return to his duty, and Paul would not hinder this, but rather further it. He might indeed have presumed on Philemon's

willingness; but, notwithstanding his need of help, he would deny himself rather than encroach on his friend.

Little do men know for what purposes the Lord leaves some to change their situations, or engage in enterprises, perhaps, from evil motives. Thus it was with Onesimus; and had not the Lord overruled in like manner some of our ungodly projects, each may reflect upon cases, in which their destruction must have been the inevitable consequence. We may also learn from hence not to despair of any, but still to use means and to offer prayer for them; and we should ever be ready to receive the penitent, with the kindness God shows to returning prodigals. Believers, especially ministers, will in all cases love to be peace-makers, and will employ all means in their power, prevail with their brethren to use lenity and forbearance.

12. The apostle calls Onesimus his own bowels, though nothing of kin to him in the flesh, in respect of the earnest and fervent love he bears to him in Christ, being a true professor of the faith. Nothing could have been said more effectual to pacify the wrath and to soften the heart of Philemon, for he hereby infers, that if he would not be appeased at his request, he would show his anger on Paul himself; and doubtless, if the conversion and turning of man to God were as highly prized and esteemed as it ought to be, we should lovingly regard, and charitably embrace all such as we see truly, without hypocrisy, converted to God, especially by ourselves—*Altiersoll*.

— Receive him, whom I love, as if it were myself, or my own son—*Bloomfield*. See Col. 4. 7—9, as a collateral proof that Onesimus was sent to Colosse at the time here referred to.

Ver. 15—22. The apostle observes that perhaps God permitted Onesimus to leave his master improperly for a season, that, being converted, he might be received on his return with affection, and might abide with Philemon with faithfulness and diligence, and that they might live together the rest of their lives as fellow-hens of eternal happiness.

When we speak of the nature of any sin or offence as against God, the evil of it is not to be lessened; but in the person of a penitent sinner, as God covers it, so must we. What riches are here of Divine grace! None so low, or mean, or vile, as utterly to be despaired of. God can meet with them when running from him; can make means effectual at one time and place, which have not been so at another. Onesimus, being returned to God, now returns to his master, who

will have more service and better hold of him than ever—by conscience of his duty, and faithfulness in it to his life's end; it will therefore be his interest now to receive him. Such changed characters often become a blessing to all among whom they reside. They promote the gospel by their example and prayers; and many have become preachers of the word of life, for behold all things are become new. Thus he would be viewed as more than a slave, as a beloved brother. He was become such to Paul, to whom he had been an entire stranger, much more might it be supposed he would be endeared to Philemon, seeing that he would be near to him as to this world, as one of his servants, and in the Lord, as one with him in Christ, by faith.

Christianity does not annul or confound our respective civil duties, but strengthens the obligation to them, and directs to the right discharge of them. If then Philemon deemed himself a partaker of the same grace with Paul, let him express his love by receiving Onesimus, with as much kindness as he would have shown to the apostle in person. There is a fellowship among saints; they have interest one in another, and must love and act accordingly. And if Philemon had suffered in his property, let him place that to the account of Paul, who promised to make it good.

True penitents will be ingenious in owning their faults, as doubtless Onesimus had been to Paul, upon his being awakened, and being brought to repentance; and especially is this to be done in cases of injury to others. The communion of saints does not destroy distinction of property. Onesimus, converted, and become a brother beloved, is Philemon's servant still, and indebted to him for wrongs he had done; these were not to be discharged but by free and voluntary remission, or on reparation made by himself, or some other in his behalf; which part, rather than full, the apostle undertakes for him. This passage is noticed as an instance of that being imputed to one, which is contracted by another; and of one becoming answerable for another, by a voluntary engagement, that he might be exempted from the punishment due to his crimes—according to the doctrine of Christ's voluntarily bearing the punishment of our sins, that we might receive the reward

of his righteousness, by a reciprocal imputation. The apostle proposed this, though he might have brought into the account that Philemon owed his ownself to him, God having made him the instrument of his eternal salvation. Paul further beseeches that he would let him have an opportunity of rejoicing on his account, in the Lord's kindness to him, and to grant this request, which would be refreshing to the apostle, as Philemon's liberality was to the saints.

Philemon was Paul's son in the faith, yet he entreats him as a brother; Onesimus was a poor slave, yet he solicits for him as if seeking some great thing for himself. Christians should do what may give joy to the hearts of one another. From the world they expect trouble; where may they look for comfort and joy but in one another? Fruits of faith and obedience in a people, are the minister's greatest joy, especially the more that love to Christ and his members appears in them, forgiving injuries, showing compassion, being merciful as their heavenly Father is merciful. The Lord's honour and service are a christian's chief aim in all things. He had written this, having confidence that Philemon would do even more than he requested. Good thoughts and expectations of us strongly move and engage our minds to do the things expected from us. The apostle knew Philemon to be a good man, and was thence persuaded of his ability to do good, with a free and liberal hand. He hoped he should himself soon follow, and know the effect of his epistle, which Philemon would therefore be the more stirred up to comply with.

Hospitality is a great christian duty, especially toward ministers, such as the apostle was, and coming out of dangers and sufferings for Christ and his gospel. Who would not show the utmost of affectionate regards to such a one? He did not know how God might deal with him, but the benefit of prayer he had often found, and hoped he should again, for deliverance, and liberty to come to them. Our dependence is on God for life, and liberty, and opportunity of service; all is by Divine pleasure. When abridged of any other mercies, our trust and hope must be in God. We must diligently use the means, and if no other should be at hand, abound in prayer: this has unlocked heaven, and opened prison

doors. Prayer of people for ministers, especially when in distress and danger, is a duty. The least may this way help the greatest. Yet, though prayer prevails, it does not merit the things obtained. They are God's gift, and Christ's purchase. The apostle says, I trust that through your prayers, I shall be freely bestowed on you. What God gives, he will yet be sought to for, that mercies may be valued the more, and God may have the praise. And if the meeting of christians on earth be denied, the grace of the Lord Jesus will be with their spirits, and they will soon meet before the throne, to join for ever in admiring the riches of redeeming love.

The example of Onesimus may encourage the vilest sinners to return to God, but it is shamefully perverted if any are emboldened thereby to persist in evil courses. Do the instances of such a change in some persons warrant the conclusion that others shall certainly be recovered? Are not many taken away in their sins, while others become more and more hardened? Resist not *present* convictions lest they return no more.—(60)

15. This suggests an affecting consideration. If Onesimus had continued a heathen, Philemon might have had him as his servant for life, but after that they would have been separated; now they would be companions for ever, in this world and the next.—*Burton*.

17. The urgency with which the apostle applies for the pardon of Onesimus would imply that the treatment he might expect was severe. *Grotius* states that masters had power, both by the roman and the greek law, to torture their slaves when they behaved ill, and even to put them to death.

18. Some consider that Onesimus had not robbed his master, but the having wronged him, relates to his absencing himself from his service, or to his having been careless and negligent previously.

20. Allay my anxieties in Christ.—*J. P. Smith*.

Ver. 23—25. Saluting is wishing health and peace. Christianity is no enemy to courtesy, but enjoins it, 1 Pet. 3.78. Epaphras was of Colosse, a countryman of Philemon. His being a fellow-prisoner in Christ Jesus, is mentioned as his glory, and the apostle's comfort. So God sometimes lightens the sufferings of his servants by the communion of saints, fellowship one with another in their bonds. Never has more enjoyment of God been found, than when suffering together for God. The mention of fellow-labourers seems in a manner to interest them in the business of the letter. Ministers must be helpers to-

gether of the truth; they serve the same Lord, in the same holy work and function, and look for the same glorious reward; therefore they must assist each other in furthering the interest of their great and common Master.

Here is the apostle's closing prayer and benediction. 1. What is wished and prayed for; grace, the free favour and love of God, together with the fruits and effects of it in all good things, for soul and body, for time and eternity. Grace is the best wish for ourselves and others; with this the apostle begins and ends. 2. From whom; our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the second Person in the Trinity, as God-man and Mediator, who purchased us, and to whom we are given by the Father, Jesus, the Saviour, Matt. 1. 21. All grace to us is from Christ; he purchased, and he bestows it. Of his fulness we all receive, and grace for grace, John 1. 16. He filleth all in all, Eph 1. 23. 3. To whom; Your spirit, not Philemon's only, but all named in the inscription. With your spirit, with you; the soul or spirit being the immediate seat of grace, whence it influences the whole man.

Amen is added, not only for strong and affectionate summing up the prayer and wish, So let it be; but as an expression of faith that it will be heard, So shall it be. What need we more to make us happy, than to have the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ with our spirit? This is the usual benediction, but it may be taken here to have special respect to the occasion; the grace of Christ with their spirits, Philemon's especially, would soften them, and dispose them to forgive others as God for Christ's sake had forgiven them.

Attersoll hence exhorts, Let us therefore grow in love with this grace of God, that we may have our hearts established with it. Let us do that now, which we should do at the last gasp and breath. Then men are ready to renounce the world, and to prefer one drop of grace and faith before a kingdom. Let us now begin to learn wisdom, let us prostrate ourselves before the throne of grace, let us never give rest to our souls till we find it, and let us sue unto Him who is the Author and Fountain of grace, namely Christ Jesus, to whom, with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be all glory and praise for ever, Amen.

THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS.

VARIOUS questions have been agitated respecting this epistle, into which it is unnecessary to enter; the results may be stated as follows. There is the strongest internal evidence to show that it is an apostolical epistle, not a discourse or dissertation. The Hebrew christians, to whom it was addressed, no doubt resided in Palestine. At that period, christians were not subject to martyrdom, in any other part of the roman empire. The greek doubtless was the language in which this epistle was originally written, and the evidence, both internal and external, as well as the testimony of the early fathers, shows it to have been written by the apostle Paul, under Divine inspiration, although his name is not prefixed as to his other epistles, probably on account of the prejudices entertained against him by the Hebrew christians. But although the composition is more highly wrought, and the language more finished than his other writings, to use the words of *Holden*, this epistle bears the peculiar and distinctive features of St. Paul's style; exhibiting the same deep acquaintance with the mosaic system, the same method of treating his subject, the same fulness of thought, the same devotional spirit, the same warmth of feeling, the same energy of expression, which characterize his other epistles. An able exposure of the fallacies of some modern critics with regard to this epistle is given by *Townsend*. The internal excellency of this epistle, as connecting the Old Testament and the New in the most convincing and instructive manner, and elucidating both more fully than any other epistle, or perhaps all of them, added to other arguments, puts the Divine inspiration of it beyond doubt. We here find the great doctrines elsewhere stated, set forth, proved, and applied to practical purposes, with peculiar animation, energy, and persuasion. It has, as *Dodati* remarks, always been received for Divine and canonical, and held in high esteem and reverence by the church, induced thereto by the light and direction of the Holy Ghost, who has imprinted in it a most certain persuasion, and lively knowledge of Divine inspiration, by which it has been indited, for an express and necessary declaration and confirmation of the highest points of faith. It shows Christ as the end, foundation, body, and truth of the figures of the law, which of themselves were of no virtue for the soul.

The occasion of writing this epistle appears from its contents. The unconverted jews used many arguments to withhold their converted brethren from the christian faith. They represented the law of Moses as superior to the christian dispensation, and depreciated every thing connected with the Saviour. The apostle, therefore, shows the superiority of Jesus of Nazareth, as the Son of God, and the benefits resulting from his sufferings and death as the sacrifice for sin, so that the christian religion is much more excellent and perfect than that of Moses. And the primary design seems to be to bring the converted Hebrews off from their attachment to the mosaic establishment, to carry them forward in the knowledge of the gospel, and thus to establish them in the christian faith, and prevent their apostasy from it, against which they are earnestly warned. See *M'Lean*.

Hales considers this epistle to be a masterly supplement to the epistles to the Romans and Galatians, and also a luminous commentary on them, showing, by a connected chain of argument, that all the legal dispensation was originally designed to be superseded by the new and better covenant of the christian dispensation. And as *Stuart* observes, while it contains many things appropriate to the Hebrews of early times, it also contains many which can never cease to interest the church of God, while christianity exists in the world.

Shuttleworth says, The tendency of the apostle's reasoning is to show, that no jew who really believes in the authority of his own sacred books, (the Old Testament,) if he reasons consistently, and adopts the inferences necessarily deducible from them, could ultimately refuse his assent to the truth of the christian dispensation, or fail of perceiving that in the person of our Redeemer, all the types and prophecies of the jewish writings, had effectually found their final completion. The point at issue is established by an appeal to those very peculiar opinions and principles, which the parties to be convinced have, above all others, the most imperative obligation to admit. The great and primary truth which it is the object of this epistle to enforce is the Divinity of our blessed Saviour, with the obvious inference deducible from that doctrine, namely, the complete sufficiency of his one great expiation for sin.

The particulars will be understood from the following analysis, chiefly from *T. H. Horne*.

PART I. demonstrates the Deity of Christ by the explicit declarations of scripture, ch. 1.—10. 18. And as the Hebrews were much attached to the legal priesthood and sacrifices, the apostle expatiates upon the superior excellence and efficacy of the priesthood and sacrifice of Christ.

The proposition is, that Christ is the true God, ch. 1. 3. The proofs of this are,—

SECT. 1. His superiority to angels, by whom he is worshipped as their Creator and Lord, ch. 1. 4.—14. Inference,—Therefore we ought to give heed to him, ch. 2. 1—4.

The superiority of Christ over angels asserted, notwithstanding his temporary humiliation in our nature, ch. 2. 5—9; without which he could not have accomplished the work of man's redemption, 10—15; and for this purpose, he took not upon him the nature of angels, but that of Abraham, 16—18.

SECT. 2. His superiority to Moses, who was only a servant, whereas Christ is Lord, ch. 3. 1—6.

Application of this argument to the believing Hebrews, who are solemnly warned not to copy the example of their unbelieving ancestors, who perished in the wilderness, ch. 3. 7—19; 4. 1—13.

Sect. 3. His superiority to Aaron and all the other high priests demonstrated. Christ is the true High Priest, adumbrated by Melchizedek and Aaron, ch. 4. 14—16; ch. 5—8; and obtained a more excellent ministry than that of the levitical high priests, inasmuch as he is the Mediator of a better covenant, consequently the making of this new covenant must have abrogated the whole mosaic establishment. In ch. 5. and 6 the apostle inserts a parenthetical digression, in which he reproves the Hebrew christians for their ignorance of the scriptures.

Sect. 4. The typical nature of the tabernacle and its furniture, and of the ordinances there observed, ch. 9. 1—10.

Sect. 5. The sacrifice of Christ is that true and only sacrifice, by which all the levitical sacrifices are abolished, ch. 9. 11—28; 10. 1—18.

Part II. The application of the preceding arguments and proofs, ch. 10. 19—39; 13. 1—19, in which the Hebrews are exhorted.

Sect. 1. To faith, prayer, and constancy in the gospel, ch. 10. 19—25. This exhortation is enforced by representations of the danger of wilfully renouncing Christ, after having received the knowledge of the truth, and it is interspersed with warnings, exhortations, and encouragements, showing the nature, excellency, and efficacy of faith, illustrated by examples of the most eminent saints, from Abel to the end of the Old Testament dispensation, ch. 10. 26—39; ch. 11.

Sect. 2. To patience and diligence in the christian course, from the testimony of former believers, and by giving particular attention to the example of Christ, and from the paternal design and salutary effect of the Lord's corrections, ch. 12. 1—13.

Sect. 3. To peace and holiness, and to a jealous watchfulness over themselves and each other, enforced by the case of Esau, ch. 12. 14—17.

Sect. 4. To an obedient reception of the gospel, and a reverential worship of God, from the superior excellency of the christian dispensation, and the proportionably greater danger and guilt of neglecting it, ch. 12. 18—29.

Sect. 5. To brotherly love, hospitality, and compassion; to charity, contentment, and the love of God, ch. 13. 1—3.

Sect. 6. To recollect the faith and examples of their deceased pastors, ch. 13. 4—8;

Sect. 7. To watchfulness against false doctrines in regard to the sacrifice of Christ, ch. 13. 9—12.

Sect. 8. To willingness to bear reproach for Him, and to thanksgiving to God, ch. 13. 13—15.

Sect. 9. To subjection to their pastors, and prayer for the apostle, ch. 13. 16—19.

Part III. The conclusion, containing a prayer for the Hebrews and apostolical salutations, ch. 13. 20—25.

Thus this epistle persuaded and pressed the believing Hebrews to a constant adherence to the christian faith, and perseverance in it, notwithstanding all the sufferings they might meet with in so doing. In order to this, the excellency of the author of the gospel, the glorious Jesus, is fully stated, showing him to be all in all. There are many things in this epistle hard to be understood, but the excellency of the instruction therein, will make abundant amends for all the pains taken to understand it. And, indeed, if we compare all the epistles of the New Testament, we shall not find any of them more replenished with divine, heavenly matter than this to the Hebrews. And we must also be sensible that the matters contained in it are of the greatest importance, and universal usefulness to all christians.

CHAPTER I.

To show the excellency of the gospel of Christ above the law, the epistle begins with an account of the different manner and seasons in which, and of the persons by whom, the revelations respectively were made; and describes the transcendent dignity of the Son of God in his Divine person, and in his creating and mediatorial work, whereby he excels all that went before him, ver. 1—3. And in his superiority to all the holy angels, which is proved by a comparison between him and them in various particulars, in which he has a glorious pre-eminence, 4—14.

Ver. 1—3. St. Paul does not mention his apostolical authority, but principally reasons with the Hebrews from the scriptures of the Old Testament, the Divine authority of which they admitted, and therefore enters on the subject without any introduction. He begins with a general and decided declaration of the excellency of the gospel dispensation above that of the law, demon-

strated from the different manner of God's communicating his mind and will to men, in the one and in the other.

1. Under the Old Testament, God spake his mind by the prophets, persons chosen of God, and qualified by him, to reveal the will of God to men: to the fathers, the Old Testament saints under that dispensation. God favoured them with much clearer light than that of nature, to which the rest of the world were then left. God spake to his ancient people at sundry times, through successive generations, and in divers manners, as he thought proper; sometimes by personal directions, sometimes by dreams, sometimes by visions, sometimes by supernatural influences on the minds of the prophets.

2. God's method of communicating himself and his will under the New Testament dispensation. The times of the gospel are the last times. The excellency

of the gospel revelation above the former consists in two things. First. It is the final revelation, to which nothing is to be added. For the gospel includes a discovery of the great events that shall befall the church of God to the end of the world. Second. It is a revelation God has made by his Son, that Messenger far superior to all the ancient patriarchs and prophets, by whom God communicated himself to his people in former times. And here we have an account of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

God hath appointed him to be Heir of all things. As God, he was equal to the Father; but all power in heaven and earth is given to him as God-man and Mediator, Matt. 28. 18; John 5. 22. By him God made the worlds. Being one with the Father and the eternal Spirit, he was the immediate Creator of the whole universe. God now spake to and redeemed sinners, by that same glorious Person, who had been the immediate Creator of the world, and who was also exalted to the mediatorial throne, as the Heir of all things. He is, in person, the Son of God, the only-begotten Son of God, and as such he must have the same nature. As the beams are effulgent emanations of the sun, the fountain of light; Jesus Christ, in his person, is God manifest in the flesh, he is Light of light, the true Shechinah. In beholding the power, wisdom, and goodness, of the Lord Jesus Christ, we behold the power, wisdom, and goodness of the Father, John 14. 7. 9. For the Son is in the Father, and the Father in the Son; the distinction is no other than consists with union. This is the glory of the person of Christ: the fulness of the Godhead dwells, not typically, but really, in him. He upholds all things by the word of his power. When, on the apostasy of man, the world was breaking to pieces under the wrath and curse of God, the Son of God, undertaking the work of redemption, sustained it by his almighty power and goodness.

From the glory of the person and office of Christ, we proceed to the glory of his grace. By himself he purged away our sins, that is, by the proper innate merit of his death and bloodshedding, by their infinite intrinsic value; as they were the sufferings of himself, he has made a full atonement for sin.

Himself, the glory of his person and nature, gave to his sufferings such merit as was a sufficient reparation of honour to God, who had suffered an infinite injury and affront by the sins of men.

From the glory of his sufferings we are led to consider the glory of his exaltation. As Mediator and Redeemer, having taken on him our nature, and suffered in it on earth, he has taken it up with him to heaven, and there it is next to God, and this was the reward of his humiliation. It is by no less a Person than this, that God has in these last days spoken to men; the dignity of the Messenger gives authority and excellency to the message, and therefore the dispensation of the gospel very far exceeds the dispensation of the law.

We never can be thankful enough that God has in so many ways, and with such increasing clearness, spoken to us fallen sinners concerning salvation. Especially that he has sent the message of mercy to us by his well beloved Son, whose dignity gives authority to every appointment, and certainty to every truth and promise. That he should by himself cleanse us from our sins is a mystery of love beyond our utmost powers of admiration, praise, and gratitude.

2 We have here an express declaration that Christ was the Framers and Creator of the world, and in the next chapter, God the Lord and Creator of the universe, who made all things, and arranged them all in order. Thus, according to Justin's own words, God created the world by his Son, and his Son, by whom he created them, was God. — *Boston.*

— There appears a great preponderance of evidence in favour of the common interpretation, "the whole material world," while, if the idea of "periods of time," were admitted, the result would be presenting the Lord Christ, though in another character, as the Lord of providence, presiding in his mediatorial capacity over all the revolutions and adjustments of time. — *J. P. Smith.*

3 "The exact impression of his manner of existence." The sentiment is too vast and high for our ideas to reach, but this seems implied, that the Son is personally distinct from the Father, for the impression and the seal are not the same thing, and that the essential nature of both is one and the same, for the manner of the existence of the Deity admits of no resemblance in any other than a necessary and infinite nature. — *J. P. Smith.*

— The word used means not person, but substance, or essence, denoting the mode of being, namely, reality of existence. — *Bloomfield.* Sitting on the right hand of a king implies partaking in the government.

Ver. 4—9 Many of the jews had a superstitious, or idolatrous respect for

angels, because they had received the law and other intimations of the Divine will by their ministry, and were in some measure subjected to their administration. They looked upon them as mediators between God and men, and some went so far as to pay them a kind of religious homage. The judaizers seem to have been assiduous in propagating these sentiments, which tended to seduce men from the regards due to Christ, the only Mediator and Head of the church. Nay, some of the jews held that the angels had been co-workers with God in the creation. It was therefore highly necessary that the apostle should insist, not only on Christ's being the Creator of all things, consequently of angels themselves, but as being the risen and exalted Messiah in human nature, to whom angels, authorities, and powers are made subject. To prove this, several passages are produced from the Old Testament scriptures. The first is the more excellent name which he has inherited, that is the name, Son of God, which implies both the Divine dignity of his person, and the power and dominion he possesses as Heir and Lord of all things, so that the power and glory to which he is advanced, as far transcends that of angels, as the name by which God has distinguished and owned him, is more excellent than any name or title he ever gave to any of the angels.—(91.)

It was said of Christ, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee, Psa. 2. 7. This was never said concerning angels, and by inheritance he has a more excellent nature and name than they. It is said concerning Christ, but never concerning the angels, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son; taken from 2 Sam. 7. 14, where it is spoken primarily of Solomon, who was a most remarkable type of Messiah. And this son-ship shall be the fountain and foundation of every gracious relation between God and fallen man. It is said of Christ, when God bringeth his First-begotten into the world, Let all the angels of God worship him; when he shall bring him again into the world, to judge the world, then let the highest creatures worship him; and those who would not have him to reign, will be destroyed before him. Worship him, all ye gods, Psa. 97. 7. All ye that are superior to men, own yourselves inferior to Christ in nature

and power. Jehovah spoke of bringing the Messiah to rule over all the world, elsewhere declared his only, begotten Son, appointed Heir of all things.

On comparing what God here says of the angels, with what he says to Christ, the inferiority of the angels to Christ will plainly appear. He maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire. Here is the office of the angels; they are God's ministers or servants, to do his pleasure. He endows them with light and zeal, with activity and ability, readiness and resolution to do his pleasure: they are servants to the Son as well as to the Father. But, how much greater things are said of Christ by the Father. A passage is quoted from Psa. 45. 6, 7, where God declares of Christ, 1. His true and real Divinity. Thy throne, O God. And now let us own and honour him as God; for if he had not been God, he had never done the Mediator's work, he had never worn the Mediator's crown. 2. God declares his dignity and dominion, as having a throne, a kingdom, and a sceptre of that kingdom. He has all right, rule, authority, and power, both as the God of nature, grace, and glory, and as Mediator. 3. God declares the eternal duration of the dominion and dignity of Christ, founded upon the Divinity of his person: Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever, from everlasting to everlasting, through all the ages of time, notwithstanding all the attempts of earth and hell to undermine and overthrow it, and through all the endless ages of eternity, when time shall be no more. God declares of Christ, A sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom, ver. 8. The righteousness of his government proceeds from the righteousness of his person; from eternal love of righteousness and hatred of iniquity, not from mere considerations of prudence or interest, but from an immovable principle; Thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity, ver. 9. Christ came to fulfil all righteousness, to bring in an everlasting righteousness; and he was righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works. He came to finish transgression, and to make an end of sin, as hateful as well as hurtful.

God declares how Christ was qualified for the office of Mediator, and how he was confirmed in it, ver. 9. Christ has the name Messiah from his being anointed.

The anointing of Christ signifies his being qualified for the office of the Mediator, with the Holy Spirit and all his graces, and likewise his appointment to the office. God, even thy God, imports the confirmation of Christ in the office of Mediator, by the covenant of redemption and peace, that was between the Father and the Son. God is the God of Christ, as Christ is Man and Mediator. Thus anointing of Christ was with the oil of gladness, which signifies both the gladness and cheerfulness with which Christ undertook and went through the office of Mediator, and also that joy which was set before him as the reward of his service and sufferings. For our salvation he abased himself, that he might redeem us to God with his blood; and shall we on that account refuse to adore and honour him, even as we honour the Father that sent him? This anointing of Christ was above the anointing of his fellows. God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows. Who are Christ's fellows? Has he any equals? Not as God, except the Father and Spirit, but these are not here meant. As Man he has his fellows, and as an anointed Person; but his unction is beyond all theirs. Above all prophets, priests, and kings, that ever were employed in the service of God on earth. Above all the saints, who are his brethren, children of the same Father, as he was partaker with them of flesh and blood. All God's other anointed ones had only the Spirit in a certain measure; Christ had the Spirit above measure, without any limitation.

4. The word here translated "made," very often signifies, and is rendered, "is;" and so it expresses what Christ really is, and may respect his being originally in himself more excellent than the angels.—*Ouyse*.

7. The glory, honour, and exaltation of angels, is not so much in their nature, as in their work and service. What is thus glorious and honourable therein, consists not in their nature and its essential properties, but in their conformity and answerableness to the mind and will of God—their moral, not merely natural endowments. Their readiness and ability to serve the providence of God is their glory.—*Owen*.

Ver. 10—12. Another passage of scripture, Ps. 102. 25—27, is recited here. In these verses the omnipotence of the Lord Jesus Christ is declared, as it appears, both in creating the world, and in changing it.

1. In creating the world, ver. 10. The Lord Christ had power before the beginning of the world, and he exerted it in giving a being to the world. He made out of nothing the foundations of the earth, the first principles of things; not only founded the earth, but the heavens are the works of his hands, and the hosts of heaven, the angels themselves; therefore he must be infinitely superior to them.

2. In changing the world that he has made. Here the mutability of this world illustrates the immutability of Christ.

This world has passed through many changes, and shall pass through more; all by the permission and under the direction of Christ, who made the world, ver. 11, 12. This our visible world, both the earth and visible heavens, is growing old, and is hastening to its dissolution. It changes like a garment, it grew old betimes, on the first apostasy, and it has been waxing older and growing weaker ever since. Yet its dissolution shall not be its utter destruction, but its change. Christ will fold up this world as a garment not to be abused any longer, not to be used as it has been.

He is not only everlasting, but unchangeable. He may indeed lay aside his vesture, but as a sovereign, when, he unrobes, after a public ceremonial, and his garments of state are folded and put away, is a sovereign still, so our Lord when he has laid aside the earth and heavens like a vesture, shall be still the same. Thou art the same; thou art He. He is the Ancient of days, who declares even to your old age, I am He, yea, before the day was, I am He.—(74.)

Let us not then set our hearts upon that which is not what we take it to be, and will not be what it now is. Sin has made a great change in the world for the worse, and Christ will make a great change in it for the better. We look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Let the consideration of this wean us from the present world, and make us watchful, diligent, and desirous of that better world; and let us wait on Christ to change us to be fit for the new world that is approaching; we cannot enter into it till we are new creatures.

Christ is immutable. Thus the Father testifies of him, Thou remainest, thy years shall not fail. Christ is the

same in himself, the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever, and the same to his people in all the changes of time. This may well support all who have an interest in Christ under all the changes they meet with in the world, and under all they feel in themselves. This may comfort us under all decays of nature that we may observe in ourselves, or in our friends, though our flesh and heart fail, and our days are hastening to an end. Christ lives to take care of us while we live, and of ours when we are gone, and this should quicken us all to make our interest in him clear and sure, that our spiritual and eternal life may be hid with Christ in God.

12. The change of a vesture, whereunto the change of the heavens is compared, being by folding up and laying aside, at least from former use, the apostle, instead of "thou shalt change," renders, "thou shalt fold," or roll them up. And that what is spoken in this psalm properly respects the Messiah was owned by the ancient Hebrews, is sufficiently evident from this, that the apostle dealing with them on their own principles, urges them with the testimony of it. The psalm also itself gives us light to the same instruction.—*Owen*.

Ver. 13, 14. God never said to the angels, Sit thou at my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool, Ps. 110. 1. Christ Jesus has his enemies, even among men, to his sovereignty, to his cause, to his people. Let us not think it strange, then, if we have enemies. Christ has done much to make all men his friends, and his Father's friends, yet he has his enemies. But they shall be made his footstool, either by humble submission, or by utter destruction; and though it be not done presently, it shall certainly be done. Christ shall go on conquering and to conquer. And it becomes his people to go on in their duty, being what he would have them to be, doing what he would have them to do, avoiding what he would have them avoid, bearing what he would have them bear, till he makes them conquerors, and more than conquerors, over all spiritual enemies.

God has said that the angels, are ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for the heirs of salvation. Christ, as Mediator, is the great Minister of God in the great work of redemption. The Holy Spirit is the great Minister of the Father and the Son in applying this redemption. Angels are ministering spirits

under the blessed Trinity, to execute the Divine will and pleasure, they are ministers of Divine Providence. The most exalted of them are ministering spirits, mere servants of the Lord, to execute all his commands with unreserved submission. The angels are sent forth to minister to those of the human race who shall be the heirs of salvation.

The saints at present are heirs, not yet come into possession. Let us make sure that we are children by regeneration and adoption, having resigned ourselves to God, and walking before him in gospel conversation, then we shall be heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ. Observe the dignity and privilege of the saints—the angels are sent forth to minister to them. This they have done in attending at the giving forth the law, and in fighting for the saints. They still minister to them in opposing the malice and power of evil spirits, in protecting and keeping their bodies, instructing and comforting their souls under Christ and the Holy Ghost; and thus they shall do in gathering all the saints together at the last day. Bless God for the ministration of angels, keep in God's way, take the comfort of this promise, that he will give his angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways.

Let us then seek mercy of our God in that way which glorifies his justice also, and that renewal of our hearts, which will make us delight in obeying his holy commands, and render us like him, in loving righteousness and hating iniquity. We should deem none of our brethren, nor any of their concerns beneath us; but, like the pure heavenly spirits, should count it our honour to do them good for Christ's sake; looking to be exalted to be equal with the angels, and to sit with Christ upon his throne, when all whose hearts and hopes are set upon perishing treasures and fading glories, will be driven from his presence into everlasting misery.

14. How different the station and employment of angels from that of the Messiah! It is however clear that they are here represented as intelligent beings. To have instituted a comparison between the Son of God and mere abstract qualities, or imaginary beings, would not be apposite to any serious purpose, and how could such be represented as worshipping the Son of God, or as ministering to the saints? That the sacred writers, every where speak of angels as intelligent beings, having a real existence, appears manifest.—*Stuart*.

CHAPTER II.

From what had been said about the dignity of Christ's person and office, the duty of stedfastly adhering to him and his gospel is enforced, ver. 1—4. The argument about Christ's pre-eminence above the angels is resumed, and that his sufferings are no objection against it is shown, 5—9. The reason of his sufferings is opened, and the fitness of that dispensation, by which he went through them to his mediatorial glory, 10—13. The incarnation of Christ, and not his assuming the nature of angels, is necessary to the discharge of his priestly office, 14—18.

Ver. 1—4. Christ being proved to be superior to the angels, this doctrine is applied. All to whom the gospel came, ought to give the more earnest and believing attention to what they heard, because of the majesty of Him that spoke, and the gracious nature of his words. If we do not take this earnest heed to the things we have heard, we shall let them slip. They will run out of our heads, hearts, lips, and lives. Our minds and memories are like a leaky vessel, they do not, without much care, retain what is poured into them. This proceeds from the corruption of our nature, temptations, worldly cares, and pleasures. It well represents the treachery of the memory respecting spiritual things, and the way in which good instructions, convictions, and affections vanish.

The Jews thought the authority of the law was increased, because angels were employed in delivering it from mount Sinai. God, as a righteous Governor and Judge, when he had given forth the law, would not let the contempt and breach of it go unpunished; but he has from time to time reckoned with the transgressors of it. The severest punishment God ever inflicted upon sinners, is what sin deserves; it is a just recompense of reward. Sinning against the gospel is neglect of this great salvation, it is a contempt of the saving grace of God in Christ, making light of it, not caring for it, not regarding either the worth of gospel grace, or the want of it, and our undone state without it. Let us take heed that we are not found among wicked wretched sinners, who neglect the grace of the gospel.

The Lord's judgments under the gospel dispensation are chiefly spiritual, but are on that account the more to be

dreaded. How then can they escape vengeance who neglect the great salvation of the gospel? The majesty of the Saviour, the immense price paid for this salvation, the depth of misery from which he saves his people, its entire freeness, the full supply for all wants, and the glorious happiness it brings, all unite in rendering it the great salvation, even so great that it passes all understanding. And nothing but our neglect of it, in one way or another, excludes us from its advantages. Here is an appeal to the consciences of sinners themselves; a challenge to all their power and policy, whether they can find a way of escape from the justice and wrath of God. The neglecters of this great salvation will be left, not only without power, but without excuse. Even partial neglects will not escape rebukes, they often bring darkness on the minds of the souls they do not finally ruin.

It began at first to be spoken by the Lord Jesus Christ, who is Jehovah, the Lord of life and glory, and as such possessed of infallible wisdom, infinite goodness, unquestionable truth and faithfulness, absolute authority, and irresistible power. The setting forth the gospel was continued and confirmed by those who heard Christ, by the evangelists and apostles, who were witnesses of what Jesus Christ began both to do and to teach. God himself testified that they were authorized and sent by him to preach salvation by Christ to the world. God bore them witness, not only by giving them great peace in their own minds, great patience under all their sufferings, and unspeakable courage and joy; but also by signs of his gracious presence with them, and his power working by them. Wonders; works beyond the power of nature, out of the course of nature. Divers miracles or mighty works, in which an almighty agency appeared beyond all controversy. Gifts of the Holy Ghost, qualifying, enabling, and exciting them to the work to which they were called. And all this according to God's own will. It was the will of God that we should have sure ground for our faith, and a strong foundation for our hope in receiving the gospel.

Thus the condescension of the Son of God, in taking our nature upon him, and publishing the glad tidings of salvation by his personal ministry, his

exaltation, and his sending his ministers to preach salvation, all united in calling attention from the mosaic dispensation to christianity. Let us then mind this one thing needful, and, attending to the holy scriptures, written by those who heard the words of our gracious Lord, and were inspired by his Spirit, and which have been confirmed by God himself; then we shall be blessed with the good part which cannot be taken away.

2. Though Jehovah spake to Moses in, and from mount Sinai, and from him the jews received the law; yet that he used the ministry of angels in dispensing it, is evident from many passages of the New Testament.—*W^m Whitby.*

Ver. 5-9: The argument concerning Christ's superiority to the angels is here resumed. The world to come, or the future age or dispensation, was a Jewish phrase, denoting the times of the Messiah. Neither the state in which the church is at present, nor that more completely restored state, at which it shall arrive when the prince of this world is cast out, and the kingdoms of the earth shall become the kingdom of Christ, is left to the government of the angels; but Christ will take to him his great power, and will reign. We then have a scripture account of that blessed Jesus to whom the gospel world is put into subjection, taken from Ps. 8. 4-6. These words are applicable to mankind in general, when they have an affectionate, thankful reference to God, concerning his wonderful condescension and kindness to the sons of men. In remembering mankind when they had no being but in the counsels of Divine love. In visiting him, God's purpose of favour for men produces gracious visits to them; and by his visitation our spirit is preserved. In making him the head of all the creatures in this lower world. In crowning him with glory and honour, giving him noble powers and faculties of soul. In giving him dominion over the inferior creatures. Yet man soon fell from his original dignity, lost his crown of honour, and retained only an imperfect dominion over the creatures. But this is plainly applied to the Lord Jesus Christ, ver. 8, 9. And what is the moving cause of all the kindness God shows to men in giving Christ for them and to them?—it is, the grace of God. For what is man? Also what are the fruits of this free grace of God, with respect to the gift of Christ for us and

to us, as is related in this scripture testimony. That God was mindful of Christ for us in the covenant of redemption; and in the fulness of time Christ came into the world, as the great Sacrifice. That God had made him a little lower than the angels, in his being made man, that he might suffer and humble himself to death. That God crowned the human nature of Christ with glory and honour, in his being perfectly holy, and having the Spirit without measure, and by an unspeakable union with the Divine nature in the second Person of the Trinity, the fulness of the Godhead dwelling in him bodily; that by sufferings he might make satisfaction, tasting death for every man, sensibly feeling and undergoing the bitter agonies of that shameful, painful, and accursed death of the cross, for all who trust in his salvation. That, as a reward of his humiliation in suffering death, he was advanced to the highest dignity in heaven, having absolute dominion over all things; thus accomplishing this ancient scripture in Christ, which never had a full accomplishment in any other sense. Thus God has done wonderful things for us in creation and providence, for which, alas, we have made the basest returns.

The general effect of God's remembering man is, that he visits him. This term designates an ordering of things, attended with great care, grace, and love. So was the nature of man before God, that he might do good unto it, in and by the person of Jesus Christ, and so he acted towards it, or visited it. This was the ground of the psalmist's admiration, and will be so in all believers unto eternity. It was not the outward state and condition of mankind in the world, which, since the entrance of sin, is sad and deplorable, that excited this admiration in the psalmist; but his mind was intent on the mystery of the grace, wisdom, and love of God, in the person, sufferings, and exaltation of the Messiah.—(52.)

6. Especially is this term of visiting used to express the acting of God in doing us good, by sending Jesus Christ to take our nature upon him, Luke 1. 68, 78.

9. But we see Jesus, who for a little while, or during the days of his flesh, was made lower than angels, that so, by the grace of God, he might taste of death for every one; him we see, for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour.—*M^r Lean.* God punishing man's sin in Him, and laying on him the iniquity of us all, Isa. 53. 4-6—*Poole.* Taste of death means experience death, suffer it.

Ver. 10—13. The apostle here removes the scandal of the cross; by showing how it became God that Christ should suffer, and how much man would be benefited by those sufferings. God is the first Cause of all things, and as such it became him to secure his own glory in all that he did. He is declared to have done this in the work of redemption, as to both the end and the means. The end was, to bring many sons to glory, to present glory in enjoying the glorious privileges of the gospel, and to future glory hereafter in heaven.

We must be the sons of God by regeneration and adoption, before we can be brought to the glory of heaven. Though the sons of God are but few in one place, and at one time, yet, when all shall be brought together, it will appear that they are many. All, how many soever they are, or however dispersed and divided, shall at length be brought together to glory. And whatever the proud, carnal, and unbelieving may imagine or object, the spiritual mind will perceive peculiar glory in the cross of Christ, and be satisfied that it became Him, who in all things makes the display of his own perfections his chief end, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the Author of their salvation perfect through sufferings. God the Father made the Lord Jesus Christ the Captain of our salvation; he appointed him to that office, he had perfection of wisdom, and courage and strength, by the Spirit of the Lord, which he had without measure; he was made perfect through sufferings; that is, he perfected the work of our redemption by shedding his blood, and was thereby perfectly qualified to be a Mediator between God and man. He found his way to the crown by the cross, and so must his people too. *Owen* observes that the Lord Christ, being consecrated and perfected through suffering, has consecrated the way of suffering for all his followers to pass through unto glory; and hereby their sufferings are made necessary and unavoidable; but they are hereby made honourable, useful, and profitable.

Hereby they are brought into a near union with Christ, ver. 11. Christ sanctifieth; he has purchased and sent the sanctifying Spirit; he is the Head of all sanctifying influences. The Spirit sanctifieth as the Spirit of Christ.

True believers are sanctified, endowed with holy principles and powers, separated and set apart to high and holy uses and purposes; so they must be before they can be brought to glory. Christ and believers are all of one. They are all of one heavenly Father, who is God.

Both are sons of God, but in different ways; one, as of the same substance with the Father, the other, as creatures. The words, his not being ashamed to call them brethren, express the high superiority of Christ to the human nature.—(75)

They are brought into an endearing relation with Christ. This results from the union. Christ is not ashamed to call them brethren, which is wonderful condescension in him, considering their meanness by nature, and vileness by sin; but he never will be ashamed of any that are not ashamed of him, and who are not a shame and reproach to him and to themselves.

This is illustrated from three texts of scripture. 1. Psalm 22. 22, Christ should have a church or congregation in the world. These should not only be brethren to one another, but to Christ. He would declare his Father's name to them, his nature, his mind and will; this he did in his own person, while he dwelt among us, and by his Spirit upon his disciples, enabling them to spread the knowledge of God from one generation to another, to the end of the world. Christ would glorify his Father, and have his people join him in it.

2. Psalm 18. 2. That sets forth the troubles that David, as a type of Christ, met with, and how he, in all his troubles, put his trust in God. It shows, that beside his Divine nature, which needed no supports, Christ was to take another nature on him, which would want the supports none but God could give. He suffered and trusted as our Head. His brethren must suffer and trust also.

3. Isaiah 8. 18. Behold I and the children which God hath given me. This proves Christ really and truly Man, for parents and children are of the same nature; children were given him of the Father, in the council of his eternal love, and the covenant of peace that was between them. And they are given to Christ at their conversion. When they take hold of his covenant, Christ receives them, rules over them, rejoices

in them, perfects their affairs, takes them to heaven, there presents them to his Father, saying, Behold I and the children thou hast given me.

For believers are not presented to the Father without the Mediator. And Christ, with his little ones, joined together, and separated from the world, are a pleasant sight for the Father to behold.—(18.)

11. "Of one." There may be in this, 1. Their being of one God, designating him and them to be one mystical body, one church, he the Head, they the members. 2. Their being taken into one covenant, made originally with him, and exemplified in them. 3. Their being of one principle of human nature—but an inconceivable difference as to their persons, he being like us in all things, sin excepted. 4. Designed to a manifold spiritual union in respect of the new nature the children receive from him.—*Thuen.*

13. Many things in Isaiah 8, are evidently prophetic of the Messiah, and as such are quoted repeatedly in the N. T., and no doubt the text here adduced was understood of him by the learned Jews. The apostle was well acquainted with their sentiments, and would not have quoted it in a sense different from the usual interpretation, without giving reasons for a new interpretation.—*T. Scott.*

Ver. 14—18. Christ as God pre-existed from all eternity, yet in the fulness of time he took our nature into union with his Divine nature, and became really and truly man. And he did not lay hold of angels, but he laid hold of the seed of Abraham. The angels fell, and remained without hope or help. Christ never designed to be the Saviour of the fallen angels, therefore he did not assume their nature; and the nature of angels could not be an atoning sacrifice for the sin of man. But Christ resolving to raise the seed of Abraham from their fallen state, took upon him the human nature, that the same nature which had sinned, might suffer. Now there is hope and help for the chief of sinners in and through Christ. Here is a price paid sufficient for all, and suitable to all, for it was in our nature. Let us then know the day of our gracious visitation, and improve that distinguishing mercy which has been shown to fallen men, not to the fallen angels.

No higher nor lower nature than man's that had sinned, could so suffer for the sin of man as to satisfy the justice of God, and make believers the children of God, and so brethren to Christ. As God, he could not die, and

therefore he assumed another nature and state. Here the wonderful love of God appeared, that, when Christ knew what he must suffer in our nature, and how he must die in it, yet he so readily took it upon him. The devil was the first tempter to sin, and sin was the procuring cause of death; he may be said to have the power of death, as he draws men into sin, the ways whereof are death, and as he is often permitted to terrify the consciences of men with the fear of death, and he is the executioner of Divine justice, being their tormentor, as he was their tempter; in these respects he may be said to have had the power of death. But Christ's atonement made way for his people's deliverance from Satan's bondage, and for the pardon of their sins through faith. Thus Satan loses his power in respect of death also, they are delivered from its sting, its terror, and its consequences; while inward peace and hope reconcile them to its stroke, and the whole will issue in their glorious resurrection to eternal life.

The fear of death is universal. The more just apprehensions men have of God and eternal things, the greater will be their dread of death, except as faith in Christ delivers them, ver. 15. And many who have been enslaved by it, are delivered from their terrors by the gospel, so that they can habitually think of dying with composure and satisfaction. Many also, who do not before get the better of their terrors, are freed from them at the last hour, and even those who fear to the last, will be the more amazed, when, by the stroke of death, which all their life-time they dreaded, they find themselves perfectly freed, and admitted to happiness beyond their expectations. Let those who dread death, and strive to get the better of their terrors, no longer attempt to outbrave or to stifle them, no longer grow careless or licentious through despair. Let them not expect help from the world, or human inventions; but let them seek pardon, peace, grace, and lively hope of heaven, by faith in Him who died and rose again, that thus they may rise superior to the fear of death.

Christ must be faithful to God, and merciful to men, in things pertaining to God, to his justice, and to his honour; to make atonement, recon-

ciliation for the sins of the people; so that God is ready to receive all who come to him through Christ. And in things pertaining to his people, to their support and comfort, ver. 18. In that he suffered, being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted. His temptations were not the least part of his sufferings, he was in all things tempted as we are, yet without sin, ch. 4 15. Observe that he is able to succour them that are tempted. The remembrance of his own sorrows and temptations makes him mindful of the trials of his people, and ready to help them. The best of christians are subject to many temptations while in this world. Temptations bring our souls into such distress and danger, that they need support and succour. But Christ is ready and willing to succour those who under their temptations apply themselves to him; and he became man, and was tempted, that he might be every way qualified to succour his people, seeing that he had passed through the same temptations himself, but continued perfectly free from sin. For so deep was man's ruin, so heinous his guilt, that it behoved Jesus to become in all things like unto us. Then let the afflicted and tempted not yield to despondency, or give place to Satan, as if temptations rendered it wrong for them to come to the Lord in prayer.

Whatever may be the effects on the mind of Christ, from his sufferings and temptations, now he is in heaven, they ought to be great on our faith and consolation, when we consider him undergoing them for this end and purpose—that seeing he was constituted our High Priest to reconcile us to God, he would be sensible of that condition in his own person, which he was afterwards to present to God, for relief to be afforded to it. And never any soul perished under temptation, that cried unto him under real apprehension of its danger, with faith and expectation of relief. This is our duty upon our first being surprized by temptations, which would stop their progress; this is our wisdom even in their success and prevalence. Were this more our practice, we should have more freedom from them, and more success against them.—(52.)

Wonderful condescension of redeeming love! Here lies the great mystery of

godliness, God made manifest in the flesh. And while Jesus sits on the throne of the universe, Lord over all, the christian is reminded that he does this in his nature, as his brother, ver. 11. In the person of Jesus, man is exalted above the angels; while Jesus passed them by, he laid down his life for us, in order to exalt us, 1 Cor. 6. 3. Deeper and deeper still becomes the mystery. The debt of gratitude appears boundless, when viewed in this light; the baseness of our ingratitude and disobedience as boundless too; and all that we can do is to lie down in the dust, overwhelmed with a sense of them, exclaiming with the prophet, Who is like unto thee? A God forgiving iniquity, and passing by the offences of thine heritage!—(97.)

14. "Him that has a deadly power."—*Stuart*. "That through his death, as an expiatory sacrifice, he might render inefficacious him who had the power of bringing death into the world, and of bringing his deluded followers to death, that is, the devil." The existence of a malignant being called the devil, is evident from this passage.—*Hollen*.

16. It was not the angels but men, that the Son of God came to assist.—*Valpy* See *Schleusner*.

CHAPTER III.

The superior worth and dignity of Christ in his person and prophetic office, above Moses, is shown, ver. 1—6. The Hebrews are warned from the example of their unbelieving ancestors, of the sin and danger of apostasy and unbelief, 7—13, and of the necessity of faith in Christ, and of a stedfast adherence to him, in order to their entering into the heavenly rest, 14—19.

Ver. 1—6. From what had been urged concerning Christ's superiority to the angels, as the incarnate Son of God, the attention of the Hebrews is called to the offices he performs for his church. How fervently and affectionately the apostle exhorts christians to have this High Priest much in their thoughts, and to make him the object of their close and serious consideration! Brethren, not only my brethren, but the brethren of Christ, and in him brethren to all the saints; all the people of God are brethren, and they should love and live like unto brethren. Holy brethren; holy, not only in profession and title, but in principle and practice, in heart and life. The day is coming when those who make this a term of

reproach, would count it their greatest honour and happiness, to be taken into this sacred brotherhood. Partakers of the heavenly calling; partakers of the means of grace, and of the Spirit of grace, that came from heaven, and by which christians are effectually called out of darkness into marvellous light; that calling which raises men to a heavenly temper and conversation, and prepares them to live forever with God in heaven.

Christ is to be considered as the Apostle of our profession, the Messenger sent of God to men, the great Revealer of that faith which we profess to hold, and of that hope which we profess to have. Not only the Apostle, but the High Priest of our profession, the chief officer of the Old Testament as well as the New, the Head of the church in every state, and under each dispensation, upon whose satisfaction and intercession we depend for pardon of sin, and acceptance with God. As Christ, the Messiah anointed for the office both of Apostle and High Priest. As Jesus, our Saviour, our Healer, the great Physician of souls, typified by the brazen serpent Moses lifted up in the wilderness, that those who were stung by the fiery serpents, might look to him, and be saved. Consider him as thus characterized. Consider what he is in himself, what he is to us, and what he will be to us hereafter and for ever. Close and serious consideration of Christ would increase our acquaintance with him, and engage our love and our obedience to him, and reliance on him. As apostle or messenger from the Father to mankind, he had more especially superseded Moses in his prophetic office, as the law-giver of Israel, as in his high-priesthood he superseded Aaron and his posterity. Of this latter office the sacred writer afterwards discourses fully, he proceeds to show how superior Christ was to Moses, as might be proved from the prophecies of his being the Son of God.

He was faithful to him that appointed him, as Moses was in all his house. Christ is an appointed Mediator. God the Father has sent and sealed him to that office, and therefore his mediation is acceptable unto the Father. He is faithful to that appoint-

ment; this was a proper argument to urge on the jews, who had so high an opinion of the faithfulness of Moses, yet his faithfulness was but typical of Christ's. Another argument is taken from the superior glory and excellence of Christ above Moses. Christ was a Maker of the house, Moses but a member in it. By the house we understand the church of God, the people of God incorporated together under Christ their Maker and Head, and, according to his law, observing his institutions. Moses was instrumental under Christ, in governing and edifying the house; but Christ is the Maker of all things. The same power was requisite to make the church as to make the world.

Christ was the Master of this house, as well as the Maker, ver. 5, 6. Moses was a faithful servant; Christ, as the eternal Son of God, is the rightful Owner and Sovereign Ruler of the church. Moses was only a typical governor, for a testimony of things relating to the church, which would be more clearly and completely revealed in the gospel by the Spirit of Christ; therefore Christ is worthy of more glory than Moses. This argument the apostle concludes, with application of it to himself and all true believers, ver. 6, Christ, whose house we are: each personally, as we are the temples of the Holy Ghost, and Christ dwells in us by faith. All of us jointly, as we are united by the bonds of graces, truths, ordinances, gospel discipline, and devotions. And with a description of those persons who constitute this house; if we hold fast the confidence, and the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end; if we maintain a bold and open profession of the truths of the gospel, upon which our hopes of grace and glory are built, and live upon and up to those hopes. There must not only be setting out well in the ways of Christ, but steadfastness and perseverance therein unto the end. In a word, believers must walk closely, comfortably, courageously, and constantly, in the faith and practice of the gospel, that their Master, when he comes, may own and approve them. We all need to be excited to consider more often the condescending Apostle, and compassionate High Priest of our profession, Jesus Christ; and every meditation on his person and his salvation, will suggest

new instructions, new motives to love, confidence, and obedience.

1. As an Apostle, Christ was superior to Moses; and as a High Priest, to Aaron. Apostle, signifies messenger — *Doddridge*.

4. Christ conducted the mosaic dispensation as the visible representative of God. — *Neovome*.

Ver. 7—13. This address was directed to professors of christianity, but it was peculiarly suited to excite the attention of such jews also as might read it. The example of their own unbelieving forefathers, and the words of their own scriptures, are brought forward, from Ps. 95. The warning by the Holy Ghost in the days of David, with reference to ancient events, was applicable to the jews in those days. They are counselled to give a speedy and present attention to the call of Christ, and are cautioned against hardening their hearts to the calls and the counsels of Christ. They are warned by the example of the Israelites their fathers in the wilderness, as in the provocation and day of temptation. Observe, days of temptation are often days of provocation. But to provoke God, when he is trying us, and is letting us see that we entirely depend and immediately live upon him, is a provocation indeed. The hardening of our hearts is the spring of all our other sins. The sins of others, especially our relations, should be warnings to us. Our fathers' sins and punishments should deter us from following their evil examples. Now, as to the sin of the forefathers of the jews, here reflected upon, observe, when they were brought out of Egypt, they tempted and provoked God; they distrusted God, and murmured against Moses. They sinned in the wilderness, where they had more immediate dependence upon God; they continued thus to sin against God forty years. The source and spring of such aggravated sins, were, They erred in their hearts; and these heart-errors produced many other errors in their lips and lives. They did not know God's ways, neither those ways of his providence in which he had walked toward them, nor those ways of his precepts in which they ought to have walked toward God; they did not observe either his providences or his ordinances in a right manner.

God had just and great resentment at their sins, and yet exercised patience

toward them, ver. 10. All sin, especially sin committed by God's professing privileged people, does not only provoke God, but it grieves him. God is loth to destroy his people in or for their sin; he waits long to be gracious to them. God keeps an exact account of the time that people go on, grieving him by their sins; but at length, if they, by their sins, continue to grieve the Spirit of God, their sin shall be made grievous to their own spirits, either in the way of judgment or mercy. An irreversible doom was passed upon them at last for their sins. God sware in his wrath, that they should not enter into his rest; the rest either of an earthly or of a heavenly Canaan. Sin, long persisted in, will make the Divine wrath burn against sinners. God's wrath will discover itself in destroying the impenitent; there is no resting under the wrath of God.

Take heed, look to it, ver. 12, 13. Christ is Head of the church, a much greater person than Moses, contempt of him must be a greater sin than contempt of Moses. The sin of others should be a warning to us; Israel's fall should forever warn all who come after; for all these things happened to them for ensamples, 1 Cor. 10. 11, and should be remembered. Take heed; all who would get safe to heaven must look about them. The admonition is enforced with an affectionate appellation; Brethren, not only in the flesh, but in the Lord; brethren whom I love, for whose welfare I labour and long. Unbelief is a great sin, it vitiates the heart of man. An evil heart of unbelief is at the bottom of all sinful departures from God; it is a leading step to apostasy; if once we allow ourselves to distrust God, we may soon desert him. Christian brethren have need to be cautioned against apostasy. Let those that think they stand, take heed lest they fall. Good counsel is subjoined to the caution, and they are advised to that which would be a remedy, they should exhort one another daily, while it is called to-day, ver. 13. They were shortly to be visited in a far more tremendous manner than their fathers in the wilderness. Since tomorrow is not ours, we must make the best improvement of this day.

There are none, even the strongest of

the flock, who do not need this mutual help of other private christians. Neither is there any so low and contemptible, but the care of their standing in the faith, and of their safety, belongs to all. Sin has so many ways and colours that we need more eyes than our own.—(18.)

There is much deceitfulness in sin: it appears fair, but is filthy; it appears pleasant, but is pernicious; it promises much, but performs nothing. The deceitfulness of sin is of a hardening nature to the soul; one sin allowed prepares for another; every act of sin confirms the habit; every one should exhort himself and others to beware of sin. The Holy Ghost still says, To-day, if ye will hear the voice of God, and submit to his righteousness and authority, do not harden your hearts. While sinners are delaying, God may be about to say, This night shall your soul be required of you. How infatuated must they be who shut their eyes and harden their hearts against conviction, run into dissipation and worldly lusts, yield to sloth, and make delays, in such a dangerous situation! Even professors must daily exhort one another while the day of life and grace continues: lest sin should first deceive and then harden them, and lesser evils end in open apostasy.

This passage is properly added to prove the personality of the Holy Spirit—*1st*ly.

8 To harden the heart, is to remain insensible to Divine admonition, to neglect it, to act in a contumacious manner—*Stant*

13. *Baxter* has the following remarks here. Question. What if rulers forbid us to meet daily for such exhortation? Answer God commands you to do it in the manner and time that the end requires, and no man can dispense with his law. The christians, for 300 years, assembled, when forbidden. Q. But what if christian rulers forbid it? A. Christians have more obligations than heathens to do good, but no more authority to do evil, or annul God's laws. Q. But what if violence or prisons restrain us? A. God requires not impossibilities.

Ver. 14—19. Here is comfort for those who not only set out well, but hold on well, and hold out to the end, ver. 14. The saints' privilege is, they are made partakers of Christ, that is, of the spirit, the nature, graces, righteousness, and life of Christ; they are interested in all Christ is, in all he has done, or will do. They hold that privilege, in their perseverance in the bold and open profession and practice of Christ and christianity. This tends to make them

watchful and diligent, and so keeps them from apostasy. The same spirit with which christians set out the ways of God, they should maintain and evidence to the end. But many at first show a great deal of courage and confidence, yet do not hold it fast to the end. Perseverance in faith is the best evidence of the sincerity of our faith. What had been quoted before from Ps. 95. 7, is resumed, and applied to those of that generation; though some who heard the voice of God, provoked him, yet all did not so. Hearing the word is the ordinary means of salvation, yet, if not hearkened to, it will expose more to the Divine wrath. God will have a remnant that obey his voice, and he will take care of such, and mention them with honour. If these all fall in a common calamity, yet they shall partake of eternal salvation, while disobedient hearers perish for ever.

But with whom was He grieved forty years? With them that sinned, ver. 17—19. That tremendous sentence included none but unbelievers, while his promises were fulfilled to the small number of believers, and even to the children of the rebels. When sin is committed by the greater part of a nation, it is most provoking. God grieves long, and bears long, when pressed with the weight of prevailing wickedness; yet he will at length ease himself of public offenders by public judgments. Unbelief is the great condemning sin of the world, especially of those who have the revelation of the mind and will of God. The happiness of being partakers of Christ and his complete salvation, and the fear of God's wrath and eternal misery, should excite us to persevere in the life of obedient faith. Let us beware of trusting to outward privileges or profession, and pray to be numbered with the true believers who enter heaven, when all others fail because of unbelief.

As faith is the spring and cause of all obedience, for without faith it is impossible to please God, and the obedience acceptable to him is the obedience of faith, so unbelief is the root of all sin. All sins of flesh and spirit have no other root. Did men believe either the threatnings or the promises of God, they would not, by their sins, so despise and neglect him as they do.

And as this is so with respect to the total prevalence of unbelief, so it is as to its partial efficacy. As our obedience follows in proportion to the operation of our faith, thus our sins and irregularities, answer the working and prevalence of unbelief in us.—(52.)

14. As the apostle here speaks, not of a future benefit, or of a promise for time to come, but of what was already actually enjoyed, the words, If we hold fast the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end, seem to be brought in, as a proof and evidence, and not as a condition of being made, or rather of having been made partakers of Christ.—*Guyss.*

CHAPTER IV.

Humble cautious fear is urged, lest any should come short of the promised rest through unbelief, ver. 1, 2. The much greater excellence of the heavenly rest, which is proposed in the gospel, than that of the earthly Canaan, which was set before the israelites under the law, is shown, 3—10. Awakening and encouraging arguments and motives to faith and hope in our approaches to God, 11—16.

Ver. 1, 2. The Divine justice towards God's ancient people, called on their descendants to fear and use diligent self-examination, lest they should fall under greater condemnation. And our privileges by Christ, under the gospel, are not only as great, but greater than those enjoyed under the mosaical law. We have a promise ~~left~~ us of entering into his rest; and those who enjoy the gospel, should maintain a holy fear lest unbelief should rob them of the benefit of the word, and of the spiritual rest promised in the gospel.

For it is said, ver. 2, To us was the gospel preached as well as unto them. The same gospel for substance was preached under both Testaments, but few ancient jews profited by the dispensation they enjoyed, from their want of faith. The word is preached to us, that we may profit by it; it is put into our hands to get heavenly wisdom. There have been in all ages many unprofitable hearers; and our unbelief is at the root of all unprofitableness under the word. We do not mix faith with what we hear. Faith in the hearer is the life of the word. This faith must be in act and exercise while we hear; and when we have heard the word, assenting to the truth of it, approving of it, accepting the mercy offered, applying

the word to ourselves, then we shall obtain profit from the word preached. Blessed be God that the gospel is preached unto us, and that exceeding great and precious promises are given to us, of entering into our heavenly rest. But it is a painful consequence of partial neglect, and of a loose and wavering profession, that they often cause men to seem to come short, even when launching into eternity. Let us then give diligence, that we may have a clear entrance into the kingdom of God.

Ver. 3—10. Here is plainly stated as a principle, that those who had believed, and those only, entered into the rest which was especially intended. They had the title and earnest of that inheritance, in peace with God and confidence in him, delight in his love and service, hope and joy through the power of the Holy Ghost, and full persuasion that happiness could only be found in the favour and salvation of the Lord Jesus. It is confirmed, that those who believe, are thus happy, and do enter into rest. 1. From God's finishing his work of creation, and appointing our first parents to rest on the seventh day. As God finished his work, and then rested from it, so he will cause those who believe, to finish their work, and then to enjoy their rest. 2. From God's continuing the observance of the sabbath, after the fall, and the revelation of a Redeemer. The seventh day was to be kept a holy sabbath to the Lord, therein praising him who had raised them up by creating power, and praying to him that he would create them anew by his Spirit of grace, and direct their faith to the promised Redeemer and Restorer of all things, by which faith they find rest in their souls. 3. From God's proposing Canaan as a typical rest for the jews who believed. And as those who did believe, Caleb and Joshua, actually entered into Canaan; so those who now believe, shall enter into rest. 4. From the certainty of another rest beside the seventh day of rest, instituted and observed both before and after the fall, and that typical Canaan rest, of which most of the jews fell short by unbelief; for the psalmist has spoken of another day and another rest.

From hence it is evident, that there is a more spiritual and excellent sabbath

remaining for the people of God, than that into which Joshua led the jews, ver. 6—9, and this rest remaining is, First, a rest of grace, and comfort, and holiness, in the gospel state. This is the rest wherewith the Lord Jesus, our Joshua, causes weary souls and awakened consciences to rest. Secondly, a rest in glory; the everlasting sabbath of heaven, where the people of God shall enjoy the end of their faith, and the object of all their desires. This is further proved from the glorious forerunners who have actually taken possession of this rest. It is certain that God, after the creating of the world in six days, entered into his rest; and it is certain that Christ, when he had finished the work of our redemption, entered into his rest as the forerunner of his people; and these were not only examples, but earnest, that believers shall enter into their rest, ver. 10. He that hath entered into rest, hath also ceased from his own works, as God did from his. Every true believer hath ceased from his own allowed works of sin, from relying on his own works of righteousness, and from resting on the burdensome works of the law; as God and Christ have ceased from their works of creation and redemption.

The whole church, all the duties, worship and privileges of it, are founded in the person, authority, and actions of Christ. And the first day of the week, the day of the resurrection of Christ, when he rested from his works, is appointed and determined for a day of rest, or sabbath unto the church, to be constantly observed in the room of the seventh day, appointed from the foundation of the world, and observed under the Old Testament.—(52.)

The rest or sabbatism which is the subject of the apostle's reasoning, and concerning which he concludes that it remains to the people of God, is undoubtedly the heavenly rest, which remains to the people of God, which is opposed to a state of labour and trouble in this world, and is the rest they shall obtain when the Lord Jesus shall appear from heaven.—(51.)

Those who do not believe, shall never enter into this spiritual rest, either of grace here or glory hereafter. This is as certain as the word of God can make it. As sure as God is entered

into his rest, so sure it is that obstinate unbelievers shall be excluded. As sure as the unbelieving jews fell in the wilderness, and never reached the promised land, so sure it is that unbelievers shall fall into destruction, and never reach heaven. As sure as Joshua, the captain of those jews, could not give them possession of Canaan, because of their unbelief, notwithstanding his eminent valour and conduct, so sure it is that even Jesus himself, the Captain of our salvation, notwithstanding all the fullness of grace and strength which dwells in him, will not give to final unbelievers either spiritual or eternal rest; it remains only for the people of God.

Under every dispensation God has declared man's rest to be in him, and his love as the only suitable and sufficient happiness of the soul; and faith in his promises, through his Son, as the only way of entering into that rest. His rich mercy, the plenteous redemption of Christ, and the word of the gospel, will not profit those who believe not in Him. Many have heard and professed the truth, who obtain not the promised rest, because of their unbelief. But the present is an accepted time, and a day of salvation, many continually enter into the earnest and beginning of this rest by faith; many enter upon the full possession of it, dying in the Lord.* Then they have done with all their sorrows, sins, and temptations, and have obtained the perfect serenity and satisfaction for which they have so often sought.

9. In this verse the apostle uses the term sabbatism, instead of that which he had previously used to express the rest which remains to the people of God. The reason seems to be, because it was usual with the jews, to whom the epistle is directed, to speak of the happiness of a future state under the title of a sabbath, and to explain several passages in the Old Testament, which mention the sabbath, as prefiguring that happiness.—*M'Lean*. The use of this term excludes any notion that the rest of God spoken of is the sabbatical rest, and by thus comparing it with the sabbath, hints that it was a symbol of the rest and happiness of the world to come.—*Bloomfield*.

10. "He, moreover, who entereth into his (God's) rest, will also cease from his own works, as God did from his." As God enjoys a most pure and perfect rest or happiness in heaven, so the believer will enjoy a similar happiness there. The rest of God, is rest like that which God enjoys. To illustrate the nature of this rest, the description of it is chosen, as following the work of creation, in order to make a comparison between it and that rest

they will have, when all their toils and sufferings were ended.—*Stuart*.

10 As those other rests that were passed, the one at the beginning of the world, the other at the giving of the law, had their foundation in the works and rest of God, whence a day of rest was given out to the church; so had this new rest a foundation in the works and rest of Christ, who built all these things and is God, determining a day for our use, in and by that whereon himself entered into his rest, that is, the first day of the week.—*Owen*.

Ver. 11—16. Here is a serious exhortation, ver. 11. Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest. Observe the end proposed; rest spiritual and eternal; the rest of grace here, and glory hereafter; in Christ on earth, with Christ in heaven. After due and diligent labour, sweet and satisfying rest shall follow; and labour now will make that rest more pleasant when it comes; the sleep of the labouring man is sweet, Eccl. 5. 12. Let us therefore labour, and let us quicken each other to be diligent in duty. We have powerful motives to make the advice effectual, drawn from the dreadful example of those who perished by unbelief. And from the great help we may have from the word of God to strengthen our faith, and excite our diligence, that we may obtain this rest, ver. 12. The holy scriptures are the word of God. This word is very active, in seizing the conscience of the sinner, and in comforting him under the wounds of the soul. It is powerful. When God sets it home by his Spirit, it convinces powerfully, converts powerfully, and comforts powerfully. It will enter where no sword can; it divides asunder the soul and the spirit, it makes a soul that has long been proud, to be humble; and a perverse spirit, to be meek and obedient. Sinful habits, that are become as it were natural to the soul, and rooted deeply in it, are separated and cut off by this sword, which divides the most secret and closely united parts. This sword can cut off the lusts of the flesh as well as the lusts of the mind, and make men willing to undergo the sharpest operation for mortifying sin. It is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart, even the most secret and remote thoughts and designs. It will discover to men their thoughts and purposes, the villainess of many, the bad principles they are actuated by, the sinful ends they act to. The word will show the sinner all that

is in his heart. Such a word as this must be a great help to faith and obedience.

From the written word we pass to the perfections of the Lord Jesus Christ, both of his person and office. His person, particularly his omniscience; ver. 13. Neither is there any creature, that is not manifest in his sight. The expressions here used are supposed to refer to the sacrifices, which were cut open, and then the whole of the inward parts were exposed to the exact inspection of the priest.

As therefore what was had must be condemned before such a judge, it was the more needful for the Hebrews to regard the High Priest here recommended to them. Even Jesus the Son of God, who having appeared in human nature, as in the court of the sanctuary, to offer his atoning sacrifice, had passed through, entering the immediate presence of the Father; and he being thus invested with all power in heaven and earth, it behoved them to hold fast their profession under all trials and temptations. Christ executed one part of his priesthood on earth, in dying for us; the other he executes in heaven, pleading the cause, and presenting the offerings of his people. The greatness of Christ is set forth by his name, Jesus; a Healer and a Saviour, the Son of God, and therefore, having Divine perfection, able to save to the uttermost all who come to God by him. He is not only a great, but a gracious High Priest, merciful, compassionate, and sympathizing with his people, ver. 15. Though he is so great and so far above us, yet he is tenderly concerned for us. He is touched with the feeling of our infirmities so as none else can be; for he was himself tried with all the affliction and trouble incident to our nature in its fallen state; and this, not only that he might be able to satisfy for us, but to sympathize with us. But he is a sinless High Priest. He was in all things tempted as we are, yet without sin. He was tempted by Satan, but he came off without sin. We seldom meet with temptations but they give us some shock, but the devil neither could find any sin in him, nor fix any stain upon him. He was holy, harmless, and undefiled; and such a High Priest became us.

In the sight of Infinite wisdom it

was needful that the Saviour of men should be one who has the fellow-feeling which no being but a fellow-creature could possibly have; and therefore it was necessary he should have an actual experience of all the effects of sin that could be separated from its actual guilt. God sent his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, Rom. 8. 3.—(95.)

Christ was incapable of sufferings in his Divine nature, consequently of human feelings under them. Therefore one great end of his assuming human nature was, that by his own experience of sufferings, he might have a fellow-feeling or sympathy with his brethren in all such circumstances. He was tempted as far as the likeness of his condition would permit; and no exception is mentioned but his being without sin—perfectly free from that depravity of nature which we derive from fallen Adam, so that when tried to the utmost, he never committed any sin, either in heart or life. And let it be considered that the more holy and pure he was, he must have had the greater repugnance in his nature to sin, and the deeper impression of its evil and demerit, consequently the more must he be concerned to deliver his people from its guilt and power.—(91.)

We should encourage ourselves by the excellency of our High Priest, to come boldly to the throne of grace, ver. 16. God might have set up a tribunal of strict and inexorable justice, only dispensing death, the wages of sin, to all convened before it; but he has set up a throne of grace. It is our duty and interest to be often before this throne of grace, waiting on the Lord in all the duties of his worship, private and public. It is good for us to be there. Our business at the throne of grace should be, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need. Mercy and grace are the things we want; mercy to pardon all our sins, and grace to purify our souls.

Pardoning mercy was one of the chief designs of the priestly office, for the procuring of which sacrifices were offered. And as sin remains in believers while in this imperfect state, they have constant need of pardoning mercy, and they are here encouraged, upon the ground of Christ's priesthood, to approach with boldness to the throne of

grace, that they may obtain mercy for the pardon of their daily short-comings. Grace, here signifies the gracious influence of the Holy Spirit, in the way of seasonable support and assistance under trials and temptations. For this gracious support of the Spirit, we must apply to the throne of grace with the confidence of faith, and with persevering earnestness and importunity. The word rendered help, signifies help obtained on our crying aloud for it.—(91.)

Besides the daily dependence we have upon God for present supplies, there are seasons for which we should provide in our prayers; times of temptation, either by adversity or prosperity, and especially our dying time. In all our approaches to the throne of grace for mercy, we should come with humble freedom and boldness, with liberty of spirit, and liberty of speech; we should ask in faith, nothing doubting; we should come with a Spirit of adoption, as children to a reconciled God and Father. We are indeed to come with reverence and godly fear, yet not as if dragged before the tribunal of justice, but as kindly invited to the mercy-seat, where grace reigns. The office of Christ, as being our High Priest, and such a High Priest, should be the ground of our confidence in all our approaches to the throne of grace. Had we not a Mediator, we could have no boldness in coming to God; for we are guilty and polluted creatures: we cannot go into the presence of God alone; we must either go with a Mediator, or our hearts and our hopes will fail us. But we have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus; he is our Advocate, and has purchased all our souls want or can desire. Let us then come for mercy to pardon our sins, to have compassion upon our miseries, and to supply our necessities. Let us pray for grace sufficient for us in all our trials and temptations, and to strengthen us for every day's service.

12. As all that is here ascribed to the word of God, relates to what Christ does by means of the written word, and to what the written word cannot do, unless as made efficacious for it by him, it amounts much to the same, in the apostle's arguments, whether we here consider Christ, or the scripture, to be signified by the word of God.—*Guyse*.

14. The Jews reckoned three heavens, the aerial, the sidereal, and the highest, or the residence of God. So there were three divisions

of the temple, the court, the holy place, and the holy of holies, to the furthest of which, and through the veil that hid it from view, the high priest passed once every year.—*Bloomfield.*

15. Sin, 1, sometimes means the principle of temptation. Christ was tried and tempted by all ways and means, from all plucules and causes, in like manner as we are, excepting only that he was not tempted by sin, which had no place in him, no part, no interest, so that it had no ground to make suggestions unto him upon. Hereby the apostle preserves in us due apprehensions of the purity and holiness of Christ, that we may not imagine he was liable to any such temptations unto sin from within, as we find ourselves liable to, who never are free from guilt and defilement. 2. Sin respects temptation as the effect of it; that which it tends and leads unto, which it designs, which it brings forth or produces. If this be intended, then all success of temptation upon our High Priest is denied. We are tried and tempted by Satan and the world, and our own lusts. Often sin actually causes, temptation has its effect in us, and upon us. It is seldom but that more or less we are sinfully affected by temptation. It was quite otherwise with our High Priest. He neither was tempted by sin, though exercised with all sorts of temptation that can come from without—such was the holiness of his nature, nor did his temptation produce any sin, such was the perfection of his obedience.—*From Owen.*

—The apostle tells us that Jesus was "without sin." But the same apostle, in his epistle to the Romans, asserts that natural concupiscence is sin. The necessary conclusion is, that Christ is free from that natural concupiscence.—And it is quite manifest, that if he "was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin," he can be "touched with the feeling of our infirmities," which is all that scripture asserts, and all that is necessary for our encouragement, with which therefore we may well rest satisfied, without aiming to be wise above what is written—the very rock upon which so many have made, and are making shipwreck.—*W. Goodce.* See also the note 1 John 3, 5.

CHAPTER V.

The office and duty of a high priest set forth. This is abundantly answered in Christ's call to, and discharge of that office, ver. 1—10. The Christian Hebrews reproved for their slothfulness, and little progress in the knowledge of the truths of the gospel prefigured by the law, 11—14.

Ver. 1—6. In order to show more fully the nature and efficacy of the high-priesthood of Christ, the apostle makes some observations on that of Aaron, which point out its insufficiency and typical meaning. The High Priest must be a man, a partaker of our nature. This implies that man had sinned. That God would not admit sinful man to come to him immediately and alone. That God was pleased to take one from among men, by whom they might ap-

proach God. Every one shall now be welcome to God, that comes to him by this High Priest; who is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, for the glory of God and the good of men, that he might come between God and man. And that he might offer gifts, as an acknowledgment that our all is of him and from him. And that he might offer sacrifices for sin; the offerings appointed to make atonement, that sin might be pardoned and sinners accepted. Christ is constituted a High Priest for both these. And now, as we value acceptance with God and pardon, we must apply by faith to this our great High Priest.

This High Priest must be one that can have compassion on the ignorant; one that can pity them, and intercede for them; one that is willing to instruct them. On those that are out of the way, out of the way of truth, duty, and happiness; one who has tenderness to lead them back from the by-paths of error, sin, and misery, into the right way. He must also be compassed with infirmity; and so be able from himself to sympathize with us. Christ was thus qualified; and this gives us great encouragement to apply to him under every affliction; for in all the afflictions of his people he is afflicted. The high priests also, being compassed with natural and moral infirmities, were liable to mistake or sin as other men, ver. 3. It was therefore prescribed that they should offer sacrifices for their own sins, as well as for those of the people, plainly intimating that they could only be typical high priests, not worthy to appear before God for themselves, without the shedding of blood.

The high priest was to be called of God; he must have both an internal and an external call to his office; for no man taketh this honour to himself, ver. 4; which showed that it derived all its efficacy from God's appointment, and not from its own intrinsic value. Those only can expect assistance from God, and acceptance with him, and his presence and blessing on them and their administrations, that are called of God. This is applied to Christ, ver. 5. So Christ glorified not himself. Consider him as God, he could not receive any additional glory; but as Mediator he did not go without being sent. He did not act as High Priest of his people without

express warrant. As was declared in the Old Testament, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee. Ps. 2. 7. God never said thus to Aaron. Another expression God used in the call of Christ, is Ps. 110. 4; Thou art a Priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedec, ver. 6. The priesthood of Aaron was but temporary, the priesthood of Christ was perpetual; the priesthood of Aaron was successive, descending from the fathers to the children, the priesthood of Christ, after the order of Melchisedec, was personal, and the High Priest immortal as to his office; without descent, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, as it is more largely described in chapter 7.

1. It is not merely to satisfy the Jew, that he need relinquish nothing of his regard for the excellence and importance of the office of high priest, by embracing Christianity, and that he has exchanged a less splendid office of priest under Judaism, for a more splendid one under Christianity, that Paul dwells so long on the virtues and dignity of Christ's office as High Priest. No doubt this object was before him when he entered upon the consideration of this topic. But why does he dwell on it so much longer than on the comparison of Christ with Moses? Not because the Jews exalted the high priest above Moses, for this surely they did not. It was because Christ, in the office of High Priest, performed that peculiar duty which, of all others, made him what he was, the *Saviour of sinners*, the *Redeemer of lost men*, because, as *priest*, he offered an *expiatory sacrifice*, which takes away the sins of the world, and makes him the propitiator for their offences. The copiousness of the epistle on this point cannot be explained, if this be not the reason of it. And if this be admitted, then there is reason enough why the apostle should dwell so long upon it. No part of the scriptures explains the nature and object of the Jewish ritual in a manner so spiritual, so satisfactory, so clear, so worthy of God, and so profitably to us, as ch. 5 to ch. 10, of the epistle to the Hebrews. As a key to the Old Testament, these chapters deserve the most attentive and thorough study of all who wish to understand the Bible. As a statement and vindication of the great work of Christ, and the atonement which he made by his blood for sin, they stand in the very first rank of all the scripture writings. As adapted to the wants and condition of those addressed, they are a consummate specimen of powerful persuasion and remonstrance. —Stuart.

Ver. 7—10. Here is an account of Christ's discharge of his priestly office. He took to him flesh, and for some days he tabernacled therein as man, in a weak, suffering state. In the days of his flesh, Christ subjected himself to death; he hungered, he was tempted, suffering, dying Jesus! God the Father could

have prevented his dying, but he would not; for then the great design of Christ's wisdom and grace must have been defeated. What then would have become of us? then we must have been miserable for ever. We have many instances of Christ's praying. This refers to his prayer in his agony, and to that before his agony, which he put up for his disciples, and for all who should believe on his name. The prayers and supplications Christ offered up, were joined with strong cries and tears; herein setting us an example, not only to pray, but to be fervent and importunate in prayer. How many dry prayers, how few wetted with tears, do we offer up to God! Christ was heard in that he feared. He had an awful sense of the wrath of God, of the weight of sin. His human nature would have sunk under the heavy load, had he been quite forsaken in point of help and comfort from God. But he was strengthened to support the immense weight of suffering laid upon him. He was carried through death; and there is no real deliverance from death but to be carried well through it. And those who are thus saved from death, shall be fully delivered at last by a glorious resurrection, of which the resurrection of Christ was the earnest and first-fruits. Or, He was heard and answered because of his piety, his reverence for the Divine Majesty, his love and zeal for the glory of the Father. He was raised and exalted and invested with the power of saving all sinners to the uttermost, who come unto God through him.

By his sufferings he learned obedience, though he was a Son, ver. 8, the only-begotten of the Father. Let none who are the children of God by adoption, expect absolute freedom from suffering. What son is he whom the father chasteneth not? Christ learned obedience; he has left us an example that we should learn humble obedience to the will of God, by all our afflictions. We need affliction, to teach us submission. By his sufferings he was made perfect, as Mediator being fully authorized and qualified for his gracious work, ver. 9. Hereby he is become the Author of eternal salvation to men. He imparts both holiness and happiness to his people, to all those of the whole human race, who

obey his call to repentance, to faith, to come to him, and to take his yoke upon them, mercifully giving them all things pertaining to that deliverance as the purchase of his own blood, and leading them forth to all the conflicts and services connected with laying hold of eternal life.

All this springs from his having been appointed of God as a High Priest after the order of Melchisedec, a King as well as a High Priest, and so of a nobler order than that of Aaron. He is exalted to be a Prince to rule us, as well as a Saviour to deliver us; and he will be a Saviour to none but to those to whom he is a Prince, and who are willing that he should reign over them. Christ alone is qualified and authorized to be our High Priest. His dignity and excellency as the Son of God, his voluntary humiliation and sufferings in the days of his flesh, assure us of his tender love and compassion, and the answer of his mentorious prayers makes way for the granting of our weak and defiled petitions, when offered in his name. His obedience in our nature encourages our attempts to obey, and our expectations of support and comfort under all the temptations and sufferings to which we are exposed. Being made perfect for this great work, he is become the Author of eternal salvation to all that obey him. But are we of that number? Do we obey his instructions as our Prophet, trust in his sacrifice and intercession as our Priest, and make his commandments the rule of our conduct?

7. How shall we account for the fear, amazement, and reluctance which Christ felt at drinking the cup of his sufferings? Can we suppose that he possessed less fortitude, patience, and resolution, than many of his followers who suffered for his sake, and through his strength have been enabled to meet the most cruel death, with joy and triumph? Such a supposition would be as absurd as it is impious. There is no accounting for this but by what the scriptures constantly affirm, that He suffered as a sacrifice for sin, and that the sufferings necessary to expiate and take away the sin of the world, were in their nature and degree peculiar to himself. There were bitter ingredients in his cup of sufferings for the sins of men, which none of them can taste in their sufferings for him, by all that men can inflict upon their bodies. It was death as the effect of the wrath of God against sin, that filled his soul with deadly sorrow, amazement, and fear, and drew from him those prayers, with strong crying and tears.—*M'Lean*.

As the Divine nature had its own acts peculiar to itself, so had the human nature its pro-

perty to itself also; and some acts were common to both the natures. So of Christ's acts, some are Divine, some human; some are both Divine and human.—*Dickson*.

Ver. 11—14. This apostle had many things to say concerning Christ that were very mysterious, and hard to be uttered; there are great mysteries in the person and offices of the Redeemer. Christ is the great Mystery of godliness; but the dulness of the Hebrews to whom he wrote, made it difficult for him to utter them. Dull hearers make the preaching of the gospel difficult, and even those who have some faith may be dull hearers, and slow to believe. This was not a mere natural infirmity, but a sinful infirmity, and the more so in them than others, by reason of the advantages the Hebrews had enjoyed for improving in the knowledge of Christ. God takes notice of the times and helps we have for gaining scripture-knowledge. Much is expected from those to whom much is given. Observe the sad disappointment of Paul's expectations; Ye have need that one should teach you again, ver. 12. Some, instead of going forward in christian knowledge, forget the very first principles they had learned long ago, which are contained in the oracles of God, when rightly understood; and indeed those who are not improving under the means of grace, will be losing. When it might have been expected that they should have been instructors of others in the great doctrine of redemption by Christ, they had so closed their minds to the truth, that they needed some one to teach them anew the very rudiments of the oracles of God. They need to be fed with milk, to be taught the plainest and most obvious truths of the gospel, being incapable of receiving and profiting by its deeper and more spiritual doctrines.

For indeed every man who can only receive the simple and more common truths of religion, without applying his mind to the more exalted parts of it, must be considered as a babe in Christ, how long soever he has been a professor of the gospel. The deeper mysteries of religion belong to those that are of a higher class, who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern respecting duty and sin, truth and error, and those sublime doctrines of christianity that relate to the counsels of God for

his own glory, and the redemption by Christ. There are spiritual senses, as well as those that are natural: the soul has its sensations as well as the body; these are depraved and lost by sin, but are recovered by grace. It is by use and exercise that these senses are improved, made more quick and able to taste the sweetness of what is good and true, and the bitterness of what is false and evil. Teaching men to distinguish between what is pleasing and what is provoking to God, between what is helpful and what is hurtful to our own souls, will greatly tend to stability, comfort, and fruitfulness, in the faith of Christ.

To be unskilful denotes "want of experience," and so respects things of the gospel. Christian experience is a spiritual sense, taste, or relish of the goodness, sweetness, and excellency of the truths of the gospel. It consists, 1. In a thorough mixture of the promises with faith, bringing Christ as it were constantly to reside in the heart. 2. In a spiritual sense of the excellency of the things believed, wherewith the affections are touched and filed. And no tongue can express that satisfaction which the soul receives in the gracious communication of a sense of Divine goodness, grace, and love to it in Christ, whence it rejoices with joy unspeakable and full of glory. 3. In experiencing the power of the word in giving peace with God, and in guiding the heart to choose and prefer spiritual, invisible, and eternal things, before those that offer immediate enjoyment—satisfying us it is best to forego present earthly things. Thus it is easy to discern of what great importance experience is.—(52.)

11. "Concerning whom, (Melchisedec) we have much speech or matter to deliver, and of difficult explanation."—*M'Lean*.

12. 13. "Milk"—the very plainest and most obvious truths of the gospel. "Strong meat," the more deep and sublime truths of the gospel; or those doctrines which reveal the spiritual sense of the Old Testament types and prophecies. "For every one who useth milk only, and knows nothing of the ancient revelations but the letter, is unskilful in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe in christian knowledge."—*M'Lean*. The word of God is called, in different places, milk and wine, and water and honey. It is honey, for the sweetness of it. It is wine, for its power to revive and refresh the spirit of man, and make his heart glad. It is water, for cooling and quenching his spiritual thirst. It is milk, for nourishment. It does more for nursing up men's souls, than the milk of the breast can do for the bodies of infants.—*Byfield*.

CHAPTER VI.

The Hebrews are excited to greater proficiency than they had yet made in the doctrine of Christ, ver. 1—3. To enforce this the dreadful nature and consequence of apostasy is described, 4—8. The apostle expresses satisfaction, as to the most of them, notwithstanding what he had said about apostates, 9, 10. And encourages to perseverance in faith and holiness, from the experience of other sincere believers, and from the promise and oath of God to Abraham, and to all the heirs of salvation, 11—20.

Ver. 1—3 The apostle proposes to lead the Hebrews into fuller acquaintance with the mysteries of redemption of which he had spoken, and thus to go on unto perfection. Without insisting on the principles or elements of the doctrine of Christ, he requested their attention to other subjects suited for their improvement. The necessity of repentance from the works of men dead in sin—which expose them to the condemnation of eternal death, was a foundation of christianity, but in this they had been instructed, and also of the necessity of faith in Christ. He did not purpose to discourse concerning baptisms, nor the laying on of hands, nor even of the important doctrine of the resurrection, or of that eternal judgment, the consequences of which will be eternal happiness or misery. But he meant to explain to them the deeper and more spiritual mysteries of redemption by Christ; and he proposed to do this if God permitted him.

Every part of the truth and will of God should, in due order, be set before all who profess the gospel, and be enforced on their hearts and consciences. We should not then be perpetually discoursing about outward things, which have their place and use, but often occupy too much attention and time which might be more profitably employed.

1, 2. "Therefore not resting ourselves contented with the knowledge of the first principles of christian religion, let us go on towards the perfect understanding of the highest mysteries thereof: not needing now to be instructed anew, in the first grounds of our catechism, in the doctrine of repentance for sin, and of faith in God."—*Bp. Hall*.

— That doctrine which is emblematically represented or signified in baptism, namely, our communion with, and conformity to Christ in his death and resurrection, by the remission of sins, and the regenerating and sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit.—*M'Lean*.

Ver. 4—8. These verses have caused much distress to many conscientious timid christians, and have been urged by others as opposed to the doctrine of the believer's perseverance. We are to remember that the apostle wrote in an age of miracles, to those among whom the Holy Spirit was poured forth in his extraordinary operations as well as in his renewing influences. The persons whose case is described, had obtained that measure of knowledge concerning christianity, which enabled them to make a satisfactory profession of it, so as to be admitted into the church. They had tasted the heavenly gift, and had been made partakers of the Holy Ghost, being endued with some measure of spiritual gifts or miraculous powers, such as the gift of tongues, or discoursing on Divine subjects, so that in this respect they had tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Spirit: their own experience proving to them the truth of the gospel. Their convictions also satisfied them that the word of God was good, of a holy and salutary tendency, and that it was for their good to attend to it. They had tasted of the powers of the world to come, in their apprehensions of a state to come, its happiness or misery.

These things, excepting miraculous gifts, take place in the hearts and consciences of men who yet continue unregenerate. They have knowledge, convictions, hopes, and fears, and times when they appear earnest, but they are not truly humbled; not spiritually minded, religion is not their delight: they do not cordially receive Christ in all his offices, or sincerely love his ordinances and commandments. The old nature, the principle of selfishness, is impressed, alarmed, or pleased, but a new nature is not produced; therefore in the time of temptation they fall away. As far as they could, they crucified to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame, by renouncing his religion, blaspheming his name, joining his enemies, and doing evil to his disciples. Such were to be considered as hardened, but the very words of this passage prove that all who are renewed unto repentance shall be pardoned. So that the humbled sinner, who pleads guilty and cries for mercy, can have no ground for discouragement from this passage, what-

ever his conscience may accuse him of. Nor does it prove that any one who is a new creature in Christ, ever becomes a final apostate from him.

The purpose and the power of God, the purchase and the prayer of Christ, the promise of the gospel, the everlasting covenant God has made with them, ordered in all things and sure, the indwelling of the Spirit, and the immortal seed of the world—these are the security of true believers. But the tree that has not these roots, will not stand.

The apostle is not speaking of the falling away of nominal professors, never convinced or influenced by the gospel; such have nothing to fall away from but an empty name, or hypocritical profession. But neither, on the other hand, is he speaking of the partial declinings or backslidings to which christians are liable in this imperfect state. Nor are such sins meant, as christians fall into through the strength of temptation, or the power of some worldly or fleshly lust. These things indeed tend to apostasy, and if continued in without repentance, must land men in everlasting misery, but still the Lord calls such to repentance. But the falling away here mentioned, is total apostasy from the christian faith, and reverting to Judaism or infidelity. It is an open and avowed renunciation of Christ, arising from enmity of heart against him, his cause and people, by men approving in their minds the deeds of his murderers, and all this after they have received the knowledge of the truth, and tasted some of its comforts. This is the description of those, concerning whom it is said that it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance. And this, not because the blood of Christ is insufficient to obtain pardon for this sin, if applied to by faith and repentance, for we are assured by innumerable promises, that God never refuses pardon to the greatest sinners upon their repentance, and faith in the atonement. But this is a wilful, voluntary, and deliberate apostasy, after having received the knowledge of the truth, arising from a rooted enmity to Christ and his cause. This in its very nature is opposite to repentance and every thing that leads to it. Thus the Hebrew apostates, here mentioned, are represented as voluntary in their apostasy, and their repentance as impossible,

so that the case is not similar to that of any who are penitent for sin. If those who through mistaken views of this passage, as well as of their own case, fear there is no mercy for them, would attend to the account given of the nature of this sin, that it is a total and voluntary renouncing of Christ, and his cause, and joining with his enemies, it might effectually relieve them from such apprehensions.—(91.)

We should ourselves beware, and ought to caution others, of every approach to so tremendous a precipice as apostasy; yet in doing this we should keep close to the word of God, and be careful not to wound and terrify the weak, or discourage the fallen and penitent. Knowledge, gifts, convictions, and very strong impressions must *precede*, or an apostasy of this kind cannot take place; great obstinacy and malignity must *follow*, before we are warranted to conclude it fatal or final. And those whom it is impossible to renew to repentance, are commonly the last to think themselves in so awful a state; and such as are most harassed by fears of this kind, are not likely to have it their case.

4. Some have supposed that in the word here rendered "enlightened," the apostle refers to "baptism." It was used in that mystical sense, but not till the second or third century. Nor does it ever appear to have such a signification in the New Testament. See *Falpy* and *Bloomfield*.

See the note at the end of this chapter for remarks on the passage ver. 4—6.

Ver 7, 8. The apostle illustrates the difference between true believers, and those who only partake of the before-mentioned illuminations and miraculous operations of the Spirit, by a similitude taken from a fruitful, and a barren soil, to show the justice of God's procedure with the latter.—(91.)

1. Here is a description of the good ground; it drinketh in the rain that cometh often upon it. Believers not only taste of the word of God, but they drink it in; this good ground brings forth fruit for the honour of Christ answerable to the cost laid out. And this fruitful field or garden receives the blessing. God declares fruitful christians blessed.

2. The bad ground is not only barren of good fruit, but fruitful in that which is bad, briars and thorns; fruitful in sin and wickedness, which are troublesome

and hurtful to all about them, and will be most so to sinners themselves at last; and then such ground is rejected. Divine influences shall be restrained; and such ground is nigh unto cursing; so far is it from receiving the blessing, that a dreadful curse hangs over it; though yet, through the patience of God, the curse is not fully executed. Its end is to be burned. So the merely nominal christian, continuing unfruitful under the means of grace, or producing nothing but hypocrisy, selfishness, and iniquity, was likely to be left under the curse of the law, was near the awful state above described: and everlasting misery was the end reserved for him, if he continued in his present unfruitfulness. Let us then watch with humble caution and watchful prayer in respect of ourselves.

Ver. 9, 10. There are things that are never separated from salvation; things that show the person to be in a state of salvation, and will issue in eternal salvation. And the things that accompany salvation, are better things than ever any hypocrite or apostate enjoyed. Also it is our duty to hope well of those in whom nothing appears to the contrary. While the apostle spoke such awful and alarming truths in reference to some, he would not have it thought that he had an unfavourable opinion of the Hebrew christians. He was persuaded better things of them, even things that accompany salvation, that they really repented, and were humble believers, spiritually minded, rooted and grounded in the love of Christ.

The apostle especially referred in the case of the jewish converts, to their manifesting their love to the name of God, as revealed in Christ, by their works and services to the saints for his sake. For though God is debtor to no man, and will reward no works which proceed from pride and self-righteousness, however splendid and laborious, yet he is not unrighteous, nor will he forget one service which springs from love to him.

The works of love, done for the glory of Christ, or done to his saints for Christ's sake, from time to time, as God gives occasion, are evident marks of a man's salvation; and more sure tokens of saving grace given, than the illuminations and tastings spoken of before,

No love is to be reckoned for love, but working love, and no works are right works, which flow not from love to Christ. And with the grace of working love towards Christ's name, the grace of salvation goes in company,—(18.)

Ver. 11—20. The apostle earnestly desired and longed that all those whom he addressed, might thenceforward show the same attentive diligence in good works; that evidencing their faith to be genuine, they might possess the full assurance of hope in respect to his final salvation, and be comforted under all trials, even to the end of life. Thus they would be distinguished from the slothful, unfruitful professors of christianity, and be approved as imitators of their pious forefathers, of those who, believing in the promises of God, and patiently continuing in well doing, had entered into rest, and were now enjoying the happiness promised of God. He who, beyond doubt is assured of his personal interest in the precious promises, sealed by the sanctifying Spirit, has the full assurance of hope. This, in the highest meaning of the words, is attained by few, and is seldom or ever preserved through the whole of life without variation or being diminished: but a prevailing assurance of acceptance and final salvation, is the privilege of all diligent and consistent christians, and is seldom much interrupted, except by misapprehensions, or by peculiar temptations and conflicts, or by their being led into sin.

The hope here intended, is a certain assured expectation of good things promised, through the accomplishment of those promises, accompanied with a love, desire, and valuing of them. Hope has its degrees, as faith also. This full assurance is not of the nature or essence of it, but an especial degree of it in its improvement. There is such a degree attainable as is always victorious, which will give the soul peace at all times, and sometimes fill it with joy.—(52.)

Then follows a clear and full account of the assured truth of the promises of God, which, being sworn to Abraham, as the father of the faithful, remain in full force to all true believers. The blessing of God is the blessedness of his people; and on those whom he has blessed indeed, he will multiply bless-

ings, till he has brought them to perfect blessedness. Abraham, in due time, obtained the promise. There is always an interval, sometimes a long one, between the promise and the performance. That interval is a trying time, but those who patiently endure shall assuredly obtain the blessedness promised. The end and design of an oath, is to put an end to all disputes within our own breasts, doubts and distrusts, or disputes with others, especially with the promiser. Now if God, who swore by himself because he could swear by no greater, condescended to engage himself by an oath to his people, he will surely remember the nature and design of it.

The promises of God are all founded in his eternal counsel; and this counsel of his is an immutable counsel. The promise of blessedness which God has made to believers, is the result of God's eternal purpose, settled between the eternal Father, Son, and Spirit. These promises of God, which are founded upon these immutable counsels of God, and confirmed by the oath of God, may safely be depended upon; for here we have *two* things which cannot change, the counsel and the oath of God, in which it is impossible for God to lie—contrary to his nature as well as to his will. And as He cannot lie, the destruction of the unbeliever, and the salvation of the believer, are alike certain.

Here observe, those to whom God has given such full security of happiness are the heirs of the promise; such as have a title to the promises by inheritance, by virtue of their new birth, and union with Christ, that they might have strong consolation. God would have his children walk in the fear of the Lord, and in the comforts of the Holy Ghost. The consolations of God are strong enough to support his people under their strongest trials. The comforts of this world are too weak to bear up the soul under temptation, persecution, and death; but the consolations of the Lord are neither few nor small to those who flee for refuge to the hope set before them. Here is a refuge for all sinners who flee to the mercy of God, through the redemption of Christ, according to the covenant of grace, renouncing all other confidences.

That most refreshing and comfortable

hope of eternal blessedness which God has given, is, and must be, to them, for an anchor to the soul, sure and steadfast, ver. 19. We are in this world as a ship at sea, tossed up and down, and in danger of being cast away. We need an anchor to keep us sure and steady. Gospel-hope is our anchor in the storms of this world. It is sure and steadfast, or else it could not keep us so. It is sure in its own nature; for it is the special work of God in the soul, it is good hope through grace; it is not a flattering hope, made out of the spider's web, but it is a true work of God, it is a strong and substantial thing. It is steadfast as to its object; it is an anchor that has taken good hold, it enters into that which is within the veil, it is an anchor that is cast upon the rock, the Rock of Ages, it does not fall on the quicksands, but enters within the veil, and fixes there upon Christ. He is the Object, he is the Anchor-hold of the believer's hope. An unseen Jesus within the veil is his hope. The free grace of God, the merits and mediation of Christ, and the powerful influences of his Spirit, are the grounds of his hope, and so it is a steadfast hope. Christ is the Object and Ground of the believer's hope, in several respects. As he is entered within the veil, to intercede with God, in virtue of that sacrifice which he offered up without the veil, hope fastens upon his sacrifice and intercession. As he is the Forerunner of his¹⁹ people, gone within the veil, to prepare a place for them, and to assure them they shall follow, he is the Earnest and First-fruits of believers, both in his resurrection and in his ascension. And he abides there now, a High Priest, after the order of Melchisedec; a Priest for ever, whose priesthood shall not cease till it has accomplished its whole design, which is the full and final happiness of all those who believe in Christ. Surely this should engage us all to clear up our interest in Christ, that we may fix our hopes in him as our Forerunner, who is entered thither for us, for our sakes, for our safety, to watch over our interest and concerns. Let us therefore set our affections on things above, and wait patiently for his appearance, when we shall certainly appear with him in glory.

¹⁹ Hope, in this and in perhaps the next verse, cannot well mean the grace of hope that

is in us, for it is said to be a hope set before us, and a hope which we fly to, and take hold upon. Hope therefore includes, and in this sense directly signifies, the object of hope, or that which is hoped in, as it often does in other places, and this object of it most directly means Christ.—*Guyse*.

20. "Whither Jesus is entered as a forerunner for us"—*Scholefield*.

— The Jews so highly esteemed the honour of the priesthood, that the apostle by exhibiting and proving the priesthood of Christ, not only pointed out the way in which the pardon of sin had been effected, but also contributed much towards causing the Messiah to be honoured in the view of the Hebrews.—*Stuart*.

ON APOSTASY.

4—6. It is evidently not of the blasphemy of the Holy Spirit, that the apostle is here treating, but of apostasy from the faith.—*Orme*.

And nothing can be gathered from this passage but what may be found in the story-ground hearers, Luke 8. 13, in those who are destitute of true christian love, 1 Cor. 13. 1—3, and as such as Christ shall at last disown as workers of iniquity. It is a part of the distinguished character of the real children of God, that instead of drawing back into perdition, they believe unto the saving of the soul, Heb. 10. 39, and amidst all their trials and occasional failings, endure unto the end, Matt. 24. 13, John 10. 15, 17, 28, 29.—*M^r Jean*.

— From the consideration of this description in all the parts of it, we may understand that the persons here intended, are not true and sincere believers in the strict and proper sense of that name, so that nothing can hence be concluded concerning those who are so. There is no mention of faith or believing, and in no other place in the scripture are such intended, but they are mentioned by what belongs essentially to their state. As to the falling away which the apostle here intends, 1. It is not the falling into this or that actual sin, be it of what nature it will; this may be, and yet not be a falling away. 2. It is not a falling away by relinquishment or surpise, for concerning such fallings, we have rules of another kind given us in sundry places, and those exemplified in special instances, but it is that which is premeditated, of deliberation and choice. 3. It is not a falling by a relinquishment of some, though very material principles of christian religion, by error or seduction, as the Corinthians fell, in denying the resurrection of the dead, and the Galatians, by denying justification by faith in Christ alone. Wherefore, 4. It must consist in a total renunciation of all the constituent principles and doctrines of christianity, whence it is denominated. Such was the sin of those who renounced the gospel, to return unto judaism, in opposition unto it, and hatred of it. 5. For the completing this falling away, according to the meaning of the apostle, it is required that this renunciation be avowed and professed—a voluntary resolved relinquishment of, and apostasy from the gospel, the faith, rule, and obedience thereof.—*Uwen*.

Things are said to be possible or impossible, with respect to the rule and order of all things which God has appointed. In things of duty, when God has neither expressly commanded them, nor appointed means for the performance of them, then are we to look on them as impossible; with respect to us they are so, and this is

here principally intended. Their renewal God has neither commanded us to endeavour, nor appointed means to attain it, nor promised to assist us in it. It may be possible with God, for aught we know, only he will not have us expect such things from him, nor hath he appointed any means for us to endeavour it.—Indeed, they put themselves out of our reach.—And for the most part such persons openly fall into such blasphemies against, and engage, if they have power, in such persecutions of the truth, that they themselves direct how others should behave towards them.—Observe further for the clearing of the design in this discourse: Here is nothing said concerning the acceptance or refusal of any upon repentance. Here is nothing that may be brought in bar against those who having fallen into any great sin, or any course in sinning, and that after light, convictions, and gifts received and exercised, yet desire to repent of their sins, and endeavour after sincerity thenceforth. Yea, such a desire and endeavour exempt any one from the judgment here threatened. There is, therefore, that in it which tends greatly to the encouragement of such sinners. For even those who are not satisfied that they do yet savingly repent, but only are sincerely exercised how they may attain thereto, have no concern in this threatening, but evidently have the door of mercy still opened unto them.—*Over.*

Guyse considers that the descriptive characters of the persons intended, all relate to the extraordinary dispensation, and miraculous gifts of the Holy Ghost in the apostle's days, and that none of them signify any special and saving operation of the Spirit.

Whatever view may be adopted in explanation of this subject, there can be no doubt that Christians are to be solemnly and earnestly warned against the danger of apostasy and consequent final perdition.—*Stuart.*

See also note ch. 10. 26.

CHAPTER VII.

The apostle returns from his digression to the comparison proposed to be made between the priesthood of Melchisedec and that of Christ, in which he gives an account of Melchisedec, ver. 1—3. The excellency of Christ's priesthood above the levitical priesthood is shown, 4—10. This is applied to Christ, setting forth the superior dignity and perfection of his priesthood, even to the superseding and disannulling of that which was after the order of Aaron, under the law, 11—23. An inference is drawn from this, to the encouragement of the faith and hope of the church, 26—28.

Ver. 1—3. The design here is not to declare the nature or the exercise of the priesthood of Christ. The nature of it had been spoken of, ch. 5, and its use is treated at large, ch. 9. But its excellency and dignity is here treated of; and that not absolutely, but in comparison with the levitical priesthood. This was conducive to the apostle's main end

with the Hebrews, and this is proved upon principles received by themselves, the faith and principles of the ancient church of Israel.—(52.)

The apostle had repeatedly referred to the prophecy, *Psa.* 110. 4, that the Messiah should be a Priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedec, signifying that his priesthood would resemble that of Melchisedec, and not that of Aaron; and he proceeds to argue from the scriptural account of that personage in *Gen.* 14. 18—20. Whence we learn that Melchisedec, king of Salem, afterwards Jerusalem, and a worshipper and priest of Jehovah, met Abraham, when returning from the rescue of Lot, blessed him, and received from him a portion of the spoils. His name, King of Righteousness, doubtless appropriate to his character, marked him as a type of the Messiah and his kingdom. The name of his city signified peace, and as king of peace he typified Christ, the Prince of Peace, and the great Reconciler of God and man. The union of the kingly and priestly office plainly pointed to the Messiah. Ver. 3 appears to refer to the circumstance, that no account is given in scripture of Melchisedec's parentage or pedigree, as in the case of the priests appointed by the law. Nothing is recorded as to the beginning or end of his life, thus he typically resembles the Son of God, whose existence is from eternity to eternity, who had no predecessor, and will have no successor, in his efficacious, meritorious, and perpetual priesthood. We are to make all possible returns of love and gratitude to the Lord Jesus for all the favours we receive from him, to pay our homage and subjection to him as our King, and to put all our offerings into his hands, to be presented by him to the Father in the incense of his own sacrifice. Every part of scripture was intended to honour the great King of Righteousness and Peace, our glorious High Priest and Saviour; and the more closely we examine it the more we shall be convinced, that the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.

3. "Without genealogy." Meaning that his name was not found in the public genealogical registers. His father and mother were unknown.—*T. H. Horne.*

—The description of Melchisedec in this verse has given rise to many different opinions.

Stuart enumerates them as follows: the Holy Spirit; a Divine emanation, superior to Christ; the Son of God himself; an angel; a man formed before the creation; Enoch sent again to live on the earth; Shem; Job; some unknown personage. *Stuart* says the opinion most agreeable to Gen. 14, and the only one which can be defended, is, that Melchisedec was a righteous and peaceful king, a worshipper and a priest of the Most High God, in the land of Canaan, a friend of Abraham, and of a rank elevated above him. The other popular opinion, that Melchisedec was Christ, would force us to adopt the interpretation—that Christ is like unto himself. See the comment on Gen. 14. 17—20.

Ver. 4—10. The greatness of Melchisedec and his priesthood appears, 1. From Abraham's paying the tenth of the spoils unto him; and it is observed, that Levi, being a descendant of Abraham, in fact, paid tithes to Melchisedec in Abraham. Levi received the office of the priesthood from God, and was to receive the tithes of the people, yet even Levi, thus by his ancestor, paid tithes to Melchisedec, as to a greater and higher priest than himself. Therefore that High Priest who should afterward appear, of whom Melchisedec was a type, must be much superior to any of the levitical priests, who, in Abraham, paid tithes to Melchisedec. 2. From Melchisedec's blessing of Abraham, who had the promises; and without contradiction, the less is blessed of the greater. Observe Abraham's great dignity and happiness; that he had the promises. He was in covenant with God. To him God had given exceeding great and precious promises. That man is rich, and happy indeed, who has the promises, both of the life that now is, and of that which is to come. This honour have all those who receive the Lord Jesus, in whom all the promises are yea and amen. Melchisedec's greater honour appears, in that it was his place and privilege to bless Abraham. He who gives the blessing, is greater than he who receives it; and therefore Christ, the antitype of Melchisedec, the meritor and Mediator of all blessings to the children of men, must be greater than all the priests of the order of Aaron. May we learn in simplicity to trust the Saviour and submit to him, to copy his righteousness, to seek the peace of his kingdom, to devote all we are and have to his service, and to expect blessings from him alone. Let us go forth in our spiritual conflicts trusting in his

word and strength, ascribing our victories to his grace, and desiring to be met and blessed by him in all our ways. The patriarchs, prophets, apostles, and angels, all own him to be infinitely better than any of themselves.

4. *Wetstein* shows from heathen writers that it was customary to dedicate the tenth part of the spoils to religious uses.

9, 10. Since Abraham was deemed, by his posterity, to be the patriarch and head of all his descendants, in such a sense as to hold a pre-eminence in rank above them; he having acknowledged his inferiority to Melchisedec by paying tithes to him, was a proof that his descendants must of course be inferior to Melchisedec. The statement here is built upon the oriental modes of estimating descent and rank; and it would follow, according to the Jewish mode of reasoning, that the priesthood of Melchisedec was of a rank superior to that of Levi—*Stuart*. He adds that many things needed by the Hebrews in their then condition, and urged upon them, are less applicable to us, merely because our circumstances differ so much from theirs.

Ver. 11—25. Perfection could not come by the levitical priesthood and the law; they could not put those who came to them, into perfect enjoyment of the good they pointed out; they could only direct them to look further. Therefore another Priest must be raised up, after the order of Melchisedec, by whom, and his law of faith, perfection might come; and, blessed be God, that we may have perfect holiness and perfect happiness, by Christ, in the covenant of grace, according to the gospel, for we are complete in him. The priesthood being changed, there must of necessity be a change of the law: the dispensation could not be the same under another priesthood; a new priesthood must be under new regulations. The priesthood and law by which perfection could not come, are abolished, 'a Priest is risen, and a dispensation now set up, by which true believers may be made perfect.

That there is such a change, is obvious. 1. There is a change in the tribe of which the priesthood comes; it was formerly the tribe of Levi; but our great High Priest sprang out of Judah, ver. 14. This change of family shows a change of the law of priesthood.

There is a change in the order of making the priests. The former law appointed that the office should descend, upon the death of the father, unto his eldest son, according to the order of carnal or natural generation. They had

both beginning of days and end of life ; and so the carnal commandment or law directed their succession, as in matters of civil right and inheritance. But the life and immortality Christ had in himself, were his right and title to the priesthood, not his descent from former priests. This gives the preference infinitely to Christ and the gospel. The law which constituted the levitical priesthood, showed that the priests were frail, dying creatures, not able to preserve their own natural lives, much less could they impart spiritual life and blessedness to those who came to them. But the High Priest of our profession, holds his office by the power of endless life in himself; not only to preserve himself alive, but to communicate spiritual and eternal life to all who rely upon his sacrifice and intercession. For though Christ died for the sins of his people, yet that was a part of his priestly office, and he had power to resume his life and preserve it for ever, that he might perpetually execute his office, as the only one capable of duly performing it, even to the end of the world. The law of the carnal commandment also may refer to the external rites of consecration, and the carnal offerings that were made; but the power of endless life, to the spiritual living sacrifices proper to the gospel, and the spiritual and eternal privileges purchased by Christ, who was consecrated by the eternal Spirit of life which he received without measure.

There is a change in the efficacy of the priesthood, ver. 18, 19. The levitical priesthood brought nothing to perfection; it could not justify from guilt: it could not sanctify from inward pollution; it could not cleanse the consciences of the worshippers. all it could do, was to lead them to the Anti-type, and to be a means of grace and faith to believers. But the priesthood of Christ brings a better hope; it shows the true foundation of all hope toward God for pardon and salvation; it clearly discovers the great objects of our hope; and so works in us a more strong and lively hope of acceptance with God. By this hope we are encouraged to draw nigh unto God, to live a life of communion with him.

There is a change in God's proceeding as to this priesthood. God never

gave any of the order of Aaron such assurance of their continuance, never engaged himself by oath or promise that theirs should be an everlasting priesthood; he gave them reason to look upon it as a temporary law. But here God has upon oath declared the immutability, excellency, efficacy, and eternity, of the priesthood of Christ.

There is a change in the dispensation of that covenant of which the priesthood was a security and the priest a surety, ver. 21. Christ is in the gospel covenant a Surety for us to God, and for God to us. He, as the Surety, has united the Divine and human nature together in his own person, and therein given us our assurance of reconciliation. He has become answerable for our debt of sin, and has engaged to satisfy Divine justice. He pleads with men to keep their covenant with God, and he pleads with God that he will fulfil his promises to men, which he is always ready to do, suitably to his Divine majesty and glory, as their gracious Mediator. The better covenant of which Jesus was the Surety, is not here contrasted with the covenant of works, by which every transgressor is shut up under the curse. It is distinguished from the Sinai covenant with Israel, and the legal dispensation under which the church so long remained. The better covenant brought the church, and every believer, into clearer light, more perfect liberty, and more abundant privileges. The temporary legal covenant with Israel must therefore be done away, as, being fulfilled, it had no longer any power.

There is a remarkable change in the number of the priests. In the order of Aaron there was a multitude of priests, of high priests, successively; but in this of Christ there is only one and the same. The reason is plain; the levitical priests were many, because their office could not secure them from dying; and after a while the number was become very great. But this our High Priest continues for ever, and his priesthood is an unchangeable one; there can be no hour or moment in which his people are without a Priest for their spiritual concerns. This is their safety and happiness, that this everlasting High Priest is able to save to the uttermost, in all times, in all cases, in every juncture, ver. 25. For Christ is able, not only by

his Almighty power, but in virtue of his priestly character and sacrifice, to save perfectly, to the end, in all possible dangers and difficulties, all who come to God, as sinners for salvation, by him, believing in his name, depending on his atonement and intercession, and asking all blessings for his sake, and as a free gift through him. This he is able to do because he is not like a man who undertakes to protect or deliver another, and perhaps dies at the time of need, but he ever lives, to plead his merits and sacrifice in behalf of his people, to present them for acceptance through the ransom of his blood, to interpose between them, and every one who would lay any thing to their charge, to protect and deliver them by his almighty power, and to give all things to them from his unsearchable riches. Surely then it becomes us to aspire after a spirituality and holiness, as much superior to those of the Old Testament believers, as our advantages exceed theirs.

22. See note, ch. 9. 15. Whether the word here used, be rendered testament or covenant, it signifies a constitution, establishment, or settlement. When it is used to express the covenant of grace, which is a covenant of free promises, it may be considered as containing the nature of a testamentary covenant, which depends entirely upon the goodwill and pleasure of the donor, as to the blessings bestowed, in which the bestowment of them shall take effect through the death of Christ, rather than as containing the nature of a strict and formal covenant, which in the usual acceptation of the word, is an agreement between two or more parties about things which are in their power to perform; which can never be reconciled to the scripture representation of the covenant of grace, as made between God and sinful men. This may be one reason why this covenant is commonly expressed by a word, which in the original primarily signifies a testament—If we consider it as a covenant of promises, which God made with his people in Christ, it was ratified by his blood, under the notion of a Mediator or Surety; but if we consider it as a testament, which Christ made, correspondent to the Divine covenant, it was ratified by his death, under the notion of a testator who has bequeathed legacies to the heirs of salvation, and has made a declaration of his will with relation thereto.—*Guyse*.

Ver. 26—28. Christ is such a High Priest as became us, holy, harmless, and undefiled. Our case, as sinners, needed a high priest to make satisfaction and intercession for us. No priest could be suitable or sufficient for our reconciliation to God but one who was perfectly righteous in his own person. He must be righteous in himself, or he

could not be a propitiation for our sin, or our advocate with the Father. The Lord Jesus is exactly such a High Priest, for he has a personal holiness, absolutely perfect. Observe the description here given of the personal holiness of Christ. 1. He is holy, perfectly free from all the habits or principles of sin, not having the least disposition to it in his nature; no sin dwells in him, not the least sinful inclination, though it does in the best of christians. 2. He is harmless, perfectly free from all actual transgression, he did no violence, nor was there any deceit in his mouth. 3. He is undefiled, he was never accessory to other men's sins. It is difficult to keep ourselves pure, so as not to partake in the guilt of other men's sins, by contributing toward them, or by not doing what we ought to prevent them. Christ was undefiled; though he took upon him the guilt of our sins, yet he never involved himself in the fact and fault of them. 4. He is separate from sinners, not only in his present state, having entered as our High Priest into the holiest of all, into which nothing defiled can enter; but in his personal purity he has no such union with sinners, as can consist with original sin. Though Christ took a true human nature, yet he was by miracle separate from all the rest of mankind. 5. He is made higher than the heavens, and exalted in heaven, at the right hand of God, to perfect the design of his priesthood, that the dignity of his Person, and the pre-eminence of his exaltation, might give efficacy to his ministrations.

He must be one who had no need to offer sacrifices for himself, or to offer repeatedly in behalf of others, as the levitical priests did daily, and the high priest on the day of expiation. But such a high priest could not be found, except Jesus; whose one offering of himself, being of infinite value, rendered further sacrifices for ever needless. The law made men high priests whose persons and services always needed atonement and forgiveness; but the word of the Lord, ratified with a solemn oath, had appointed the Son of God to that office, who was in all respects competent to it, as he alone could be, and he was consecrated or perfected to it for evermore.

None then need to be dismayed who

will come to God, in the name of his beloved Son. And let believers meditate on the power and grace of their great High Priest; and then copy his holy, harmless and undefiled conduct, and his separation from sinners. Then they may feel assured that he will deliver them in the time of trial and suffering, in the time of prosperity, in the hour of death, and in the day of judgment.

26. "Higher than the heavens."—*Goodwin* thinks this may be referred to the personal holiness of Christ, which is greater and more perfect than the holiness of the hosts of heaven, the holy angels themselves, who, though they are free from sin, yet not in themselves free from all possibility of ^{sinning} ~~sinning~~. And therefore we read, Job 4, 18, God putteth no trust in his holy ones, and he chargeth his angels with folly, that is, with weakness and peccability.

27. He needed not to offer up for himself, his was a disinterested mediation. He mediated for that mercy for others, which he did not need for himself, had he needed it himself, he had been a party, and could not have been a Mediator; a criminal, and could not have been an Advocate for sinners. To render his mediation the more impartial and disinterested, it seems requisite, not only that he had no present need of that favour for himself, which he mediated for in behalf of others, but that he never could stand in need of it. Though he needed it not to-day, yet if he knew he might be in such circumstances as to need it to-morrow, or in any future time, he must have been thought to have had some regard to his own interest, and therefore could not act with impartial regard and pure zeal for the honour of God on the one hand, and tender pure compassion for poor sinners on the other.—*Tong*.

CHAPTER VIII

The argument from the comparison of the priesthood of Melchizedec with that of Aaron being finished, the main design therein, to demonstrate the excellency of Christ's priesthood above that of Aaron, is shown, and still further light is added, by comparing him with, and preferring him to the high priests under the law, with respect to the place where he officiates, the sacrifice he offers, and the covenant of which he is the Mediator, ver. 1-6. Then follows a representation of the great excellence of this covenant above the former, which is now abolished, 7-13.

Ver. 1-6. The substance or summary of what had been declared was, that Christians had such a High Priest as they needed. Who, having finished his work on earth, had ascended into the heavens, and was exalted to sit at the right hand of the throne of the Divine Majesty in the heavens. There the Mediator is placed, and he is possessed

of all authority and power, both in heaven and upon earth. This authority he exercises for the glory of his Father, for his own honour, and for the happiness of all who belong to him. Having finished the work of satisfaction in the true tabernacle of his own human body, he is now a Minister of the sanctuary, the holy of holies, the true tabernacle in heaven, there taking care of his people's affairs, interceding with God for them, that their sins may be pardoned, and their persons and services accepted, through the merit of his sacrifice. He is not only in heaven, enjoying great dominion and dignity, but, as the High Priest of his church, executing this office for every member of his church.

As every high priest, according to the law, was appointed to offer gifts and sacrifices; so it was requisite that "this Person," even Christ, should have something to offer. He therefore assumed human nature, appeared on earth, and there gave himself a sacrifice to God for the sins of his people. He then ascended into heaven to appear before God as with the blood of the sacrifice, in their behalf; all which corresponded to the method prescribed to the high priest on the great day of expiation. We must not dare to approach God, or to present any thing to him, but in and through Christ, depending upon his merits and mediation; for if we are accepted, it is in the Beloved.

Christ must now execute his priesthood in heaven, in the holy of holies, the true tabernacle which the Lord hath fixed. Thus the type must be fully answered; having finished the work of sacrificing here, he must go into heaven, to present his righteousness, and to make intercession there. For, if Christ were on earth, he should not be a Priest, ver. 4, that is, not according to the levitical law; and all the services of the priest, under the law, and every thing in that tabernacle which was framed according to the pattern in the mount, were only shadows of heavenly things, ver. 5. In all our obedience and worship, we should keep close to the only and perfect standard of God's word. Christ is the Substance and End of the law of righteousness. Something there must be in Christ's priesthood, that answers to the high priest's entering within the veil to make intercession; and

that is, the ascension of Christ into heaven, and his appearance there in the sight of God for his people, to present their prayers, and plead their cause. If he had continued on earth, he would not have been a perfect priest; and an imperfect one he could not be.

Instead of interfering with the priests in the typical services of the temple, Christ had obtained a far superior ministry, as the covenant of which he was the Mediator was a better covenant, founded and established on better promises. The mosaic dispensation contained in it a typical gospel, and its ordinances were means of grace, as well as acts of worship. But the covenant here referred to, was that made with Israel as a nation, securing temporal benefits to them. The promises of all spiritual blessings, and of eternal life, revealed in the gospel, and ratified through Christ, are of infinitely greater value. Let us bless God that we have such a High Priest as suits our helpless condition, and that a better covenant has been made with him in behalf of his people, established on better promises than those given to Israel. Let us draw nigh to him in this appointed way; as spiritual worshippers, in faith and submission to his righteousness, relying on his mercy and truth, and praying for the promised blessings.

* 1 The word rendered, "the sum," means, "the principal point."—*Bloomfield*. "The most important thing in regard to what we are now treating of."—*Stuart*.

2 In this explanation of the symbolical representations by which it pleased the Holy Spirit, under the former dispensation, to prefigure the blessings of christianity, the interior sanctuary, or holy of holies, seems to be put as the sign of the heavenly state; and the outer tabernacle, as that of the flesh or human nature of the Messiah.—*J. P. Smith*.

4 Through the whole of this epistle, Christ is never represented officiating as High Priest but in his resurrection state.—*M'Lean*.

5 "Who serve the pattern and shadow of heavenly things."—*Schulze*. "Who minister in that tabernacle, and do the service of it, which was a typical draught and shadowy representation of the true tabernacle, in which our blessed Lord now officiates in heaven, as an intercessory High Priest."—*Guyse*.

Ver. 7—13. The superior excellency of the priesthood of Christ above that of Aaron, is shown from the excellency of that covenant of grace, of which Christ was Mediator. Had the first covenant been suited to bring the church to the

highest perfection to which it could be advanced on earth, there would have been no occasion for a second. But the first covenant was not faultless, ver. 7, 8; it was a schoolmaster to bring us to Christ; it was perfect in its kind, and fitted to answer its end, but very imperfect in comparison with the gospel. It was not sure or steadfast; for the jews continued not in that covenant, and the Lord regarded them not, ver. 9. They dealt ungratefully with their God, and fell under his displeasure.

The law required exact obedience, but gave no inward spiritual assistance for the performance of that duty. The law not only made all who were subject to it obnoxious to condemnation for the guilt of sin, but also was unable to remove that guilt, and clear the conscience from the sense and terror of it. Whereas, by virtue of the blood of Christ, a full remission of sins was provided, so that God would remember them no more; thus the conscience was thereby purified from dead works.—(99)

The second is a new covenant, even that new covenant which God declared long before he would make with the house of Israel, that is all the Israel of God; this was promised by Jeremiah, 31. 31, 32, and was accomplished in Christ. This will always be a new covenant, in which all who truly take hold of it, shall be always found preserved by the power of God. It is God's covenant; his mercy, love, and grace, moved for it; his wisdom devised it; his Son purchased it; his Spirit brings souls into it, and builds them up in it.

God once wrote his laws to his people, ver. 10, now he will write his laws in them; he will give them understanding to know and to believe his laws; he will give them memories to retain them; he will give them hearts to love them, and consciences to recognise them; he will give them courage to profess them, and power to put them in practice. The whole habit and frame of their souls shall be a table and transcript of the law of God. This is the foundation of the covenant; and when this is laid, duty will be done wisely, sincerely, readily, easily, resolutely, constantly, and with comfort. He will be to them a God; he will be all that to them, and do all that for them, which God can be and do. Nothing more can be

said in a thousand volumes, than is comprehended in these few words, I will be a God to them. They shall be to him a people, to love, honour, observe, and obey him in all things. Those will do this who have God for their God; He will enable them to do it, as an evidence that he is their God, and that they are his people. They shall grow more and more acquainted with their God, ver. 11. In the want of better instruction, one neighbour should teach another to know the Lord, as they have ability and opportunity. A plentiful effusion of the Spirit of God will make the ministration of the gospel so effectual, that there shall be a mighty increase and spreading of christian knowledge in persons of all sorts. O that this promise might be fulfilled in our days, that the hand of God may be with his ministers, that great numbers may believe, and may be turned to the Lord!

The pardon of sin always will be found to accompany the true knowledge of God, ver. 12. 1. The freeness of this pardon; it does not result from merit in man, but from mercy in God. 2. The fulness of this pardon: it extends to all their unrighteousness, sins, and iniquities. 3. The fixedness of this pardon; God will remember their sins no more; he will not recall his pardon; he will not only forgive their sins, but forget them. This pardoning mercy is connected with all other spiritual mercies; unpardoned sin prevents mercy, and pulls down judgments; but the pardon of sin prevents judgment, and opens a wide door to all spiritual blessings. It is the effect of the mercy that is from everlasting, and the earnest of that mercy that shall be to everlasting. This is the excellency of the new dispensation, and these the articles of it. We have no reason to repine, but great reason to rejoice, that the former dispensation is become old and is vanished away.

Let us inquire whether the new covenant is really sealed and ratified to us. Whether we are actuated by a principle of genuine repentance and willing obedience, whether we are taught by the Holy Spirit to know him, so as uprightly to love, fear, trust, and obey him. This righteousness shall be for ever, this salvation shall not be abolished, the blessings of this new, unchangeable covenant, will be the eternal portion of every

true believer. But all other things, whether worldly vanities, outward privileges, or mere notions of religion, will soon decay, wax old, vanish away, and leave those who trust in them miserable for evermore.

8. "New covenant," here means a new arrangement or disposition made by Christ; that is, one which has in some respects new conditions and new promises. The meaning of the word embraces both precept and promise, and may be used for either, or for both at the same time.—*Stuart*. See notes 7, 22; 9, 15.

CHAPTER IX.

Here is an account of the jewish tabernacle and its utensils, ver. 1—5. Their use and meaning, as to their figurative services and sacrifices is shown, 6—10. Their accomplishment in Christ explained, 11—22. The necessity, superior dignity, and efficacy of his priesthood and sacrifice, is inferred in an application of what is said about those who belonged to the tabernacle under the law, 23—28.

Ver. 1—5. The apostle proceeds to show to the Hebrews the typical reference of their legal ceremonies to Christ. The first covenant had indeed ordinances of Divine worship, the observance of which was required from Israel as a nation, and it had sacred utensils, in a sanctuary built of such materials, and adorned with such magnificence as the present world affords, and men admire. This tabernacle was a moveable temple, shadowing forth the unsettled state of the church militant, and the human nature of the Lord Jesus Christ, in whom the fulness of the Godhead dwelt bodily. Now of this tabernacle it is said, that it was divided into two parts, called a first and second tabernacle, an inner and an outer part. In the outer part there were several articles. 1. The candlestick on which the lamps were always burning. And there was need of it, for there were no windows in the sanctuary; showing the comparative darkness of that dispensation. 2. The table and the shew bread upon it, representing the provision made in Christ suitable to the wants and to the relief of their souls. He is the Bread of life; in our Father's house there is bread enough and to spare; we may have fresh supplies from Christ, especially every Lord's day.

In the inner part of the sanctuary, the holiest of all, was the golden censer, to

hold the incense, typical of Christ, of the prevailing intercession he makes in heaven, grounded upon the merits and satisfaction of his sacrifice, upon which we are to depend for acceptance and the blessing from God. Also the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with pure gold, ver. 4. This typified Christ, his perfect obedience to the law, and his fulfilling of all righteousness for us. And the golden pot that had manna, a memorial of God's miraculously feeding his people in the wilderness, that they might never forget such signal favour, nor distrust God for the time to come. Also Aaron's rod that budded; which showed that God had chosen him. And the tables of the covenant, in which the moral law was written, signifying the regard God has to his holy law, and the care we ought to have, that we keep the law of God; this we can only do in and through Christ, by strength from him, nor can our obedience be accepted unless through him. Over it were the cherubim of glory shadowing the mercy-seat.

The typical import of all these things has been shown, and we need not enter into it further, except to remark that the ordinances and articles of the mosaic covenant point out Christ as our Light, and the Bread of life to our souls; and remind us of his Divine Person, his efficacious priesthood, perfect righteousness, and all-prevailing intercession.

Thus was the Lord Christ, all and in all, from the beginning. And as the general design of the whole structure of the tabernacle, with all that belonged thereunto, was to declare that God was reconciled to sinners, with a blessed provision for the glory of his holiness and the honour of the law, which is in and by Jesus Christ alone, so every thing in it directed unto his person or his grace, or to some act of his mediation. And as interpreted by gospel light, they are a glorious representation of the wisdom of God, and a signal confirmation of faith in Him who was prefigured by them.—(52.)

1. "A worldly sanctuary." Each of the three words is wrongly translated. It should be, "The holy furniture"—*Scholefield*. *Blountfield*, however, contends for the common rendering.

4. The words rendered, "wherein," should be, "in which," referring to the tabernacle.—*T. H. Hoare*. A question also has risen whether the golden altar or the golden censer is meant here, but the difference is not material.

5. This recital of the tabernacle utensils intimates there was a mystical meaning in them, though not here gone into.—*Guyse*.

Ver. 6—10. From the description of the place of worship in the Old Testament dispensation, the apostle proceeds to speak of the services. When the parts and furniture of the tabernacle were thus settled, the ordinary priests went always into the first tabernacle, to accomplish the service of God, and fulfil the ministry they had received. Into the second, the inner part, went the high priest alone, ver. 7. This part was an emblem of heaven, and Christ's ascension thither. None but the high priest must go into the holiest; so none but Christ could enter into heaven in his own name, by his own right. The high priest must go through the outer sanctuary, and through the vail; Christ went to heaven through a holy life and a violent death; the vail of his flesh was rent asunder. The high priest entered once a year into the holiest, but the Antitype is entered once for all. The high priest must not enter without blood; Christ, having undertaken to be our High Priest, could not enter into heaven till he had shed his blood for us; and none of us can enter, either into God's gracious presence here, or his glorious presence hereafter, but by the blood of Jesus. The high priest, under the law, entering into the holiest, offered up blood for himself and his own errors first, and then for the errors of the people, ver. 7. Christ is more excellent than any under the law, for he had no errors of his own to offer for. But ministers, when in the name of Christ they intercede for others, must first apply the blood of Christ for their own pardon. When the high priest had offered for himself, he must also offer for the errors of the people. Our High Priest, though he needs not to offer for himself, yet he forgets not to offer for his people; he pleads the merit of his sufferings for the benefit of his people on earth. Sins are errors, great errors, both in judgment and practice. We greatly err when we sin against God; and who can understand all his errors? They leave guilt upon the conscience, not to be washed away but by the blood of Christ; and the sinful errors of priests and people must be all done away by the application of the

blood of Christ. We must plead this blood on earth, while he is pleading it for us in heaven. Several things are mentioned, as what the Holy Ghost signified and certified to his people by the levitical law. The way into the holiest was not made manifest, while the first tabernacle was standing, and the ceremonies of that worship continued in force. A few believers, under the Divine teaching, saw a little of the way of access to God, of communion with him, and of admission into heaven through the promised Redeemer, but the israelites in general looked no further than these outward forms.

And none of the gifts and sacrifices there offered could make the offerers perfect as pertaining to the conscience, ver. 9; that is, they could not take away the desert, or defilement, or dominion of sin. They could not deliver the conscience from a dread of the wrath of God; they could neither discharge the debts, nor resolve the doubts, of him who did the service. They could not make a perfect reconciliation between the sinner and his offended Judge. The offerers who rested in them, and did not by faith rely on the promised Saviour, could not obtain forgiveness of sins, or spiritual blessings, but were only exempted from temporal punishment, and admitted to outward privileges. And as to the other outward ordinances or regulations of that covenant, connected with its sacrifices, they were imposed for wise purposes, but only till the coming of the Messiah, which was to be a time of reformation by the introduction of a more simple and spiritual worship; so they could be of no use to the jews, who rejected Christ out of zeal for these outward ceremonies.

The Holy Ghost here signifies, that the Old Testament institutions were but outward carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation. Gospel times are and should be times of reformation, of clearer light as to all things necessary to be known, of greater love, inducing us to bear ill-will to none, but good-will to all, and to have complacency in all that are like God. We have greater freedom, both of spirit and speech in the gospel, and greater obligations to a more holy living. We have far greater advantages under the gospel than the jews had under the law.

Respect is had to the whole state of

the church in general, and what God designed for it, taking the word reformation in a universal sense for the introduction of a new animating form and life, with new means and ways for their expression and exercise, in new ordinances of worship. Observe, there is nothing in its own nature so mean, but the will and authority of God can render it of sacred use and efficacy. The fixing of times and seasons for the state of things in the church is solely in the hand of God, wherefore quiet waiting alone is our duty, as to the accomplishment of all promises concerning the state of the church in this world. Freedom and liberty from legal impositions in the worship of God, is a part of the blessed liberty the Lord Jesus Christ brought into the church. And the time of Christ's coming was the time of the general final reformation of the worship of God, wherein all things were unchangeably directed unto their proper use.—(52)

6, 7. "Enters." Both verbs in the original are in the present tense. It is important that we should be satisfied this epistle was composed before the destruction of Jerusalem, as that event is directly foretold in it.—*Shuttleworth*.

Ver. 11—14. After long expectation the promised Redeemer was come, a High Priest, capable of procuring and bestowing the blessings of salvation on believers, and fulfilling all the ancient promises. All the good things that were to come during the Old Testament, are now come under the New. All the spiritual and eternal blessings the Old Testament saints had, were owing to the Messiah to come, on whom they believed. And all the good things yet to come, and to be enjoyed in a gospel state, when the promises and prophecies made to the gospel church in the latter days shall be accomplished. Also of all the good things to come in the heavenly state, which will perfect both testaments. All good things past, present, and to come, were and are founded upon, and flowing from the priestly office of Christ. Christ is a High Priest by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, ver. 11, his own body, or rather human nature. This was a fabric infinitely superior to all earthly structures. Or, it may be explained of the heavens themselves, where he appears in the presence of God for us. Christ, our High

Priest, is entered into heaven, not as their high priest entered into the holiest, with the blood of bulls and of goats, but by his own blood, typified by theirs, and infinitely more precious. And this not for one year only, which showed the imperfection of that priesthood. But our High Priest entered into heaven once for all, and has obtained eternal redemption, and so needs not to make an annual entrance. In each of the types there was something that showed it was a type, and resembled the Antitype, and something that showed it was but a type, and fell short of the Antitype. Now the gate of heaven is thrown open to all believers. Eternal redemption, and the promise of an eternal inheritance are purchased for us by the blood of Christ. The Holy Ghost further signified and showed what was the efficacy of the blood of the Old Testament sacrifices, and from thence inferred the much greater efficacy of the blood of Christ. The efficacy of the blood of the legal sacrifices extended to the purifying of the flesh, ver. 13; it freed the outward man from ceremonial uncleanness, and from temporal punishment, and entitled him to, and fitted him for some external privileges. Very justly from hence the far greater efficacy of the blood of Christ is inferred, ver. 14.

What gave such efficacy to the blood of Christ? It was his offering himself to God, he being Priest, Altar, and Sacrifice. It was Christ's offering up himself to God through the eternal Spirit, not only as the Divine nature supported the human, but the Holy Ghost, which he had without measure, helping in all, and in this great act of obedience offering himself. It was Christ's offering himself to God without any sinful stain in his nature or life; this was conformable to the sacrifices of the law, which were to be without blemish. Further, the efficacy of Christ's blood is very great, it reaches to the very soul and conscience; the defiled soul, defiled with sin, which is a dead work, proceeds from spiritual death, and tends to death eternal. As the touching of a dead body gave a legal uncleanness, so meddling with sin gives moral and real defilement, fixes it in the soul; but the blood of Christ has efficacy to purge it out. It is sufficient to enable us to serve the living God, not only by

purging away the guilt that separates between God and sinners, but by sanctifying and renewing the soul, through the gracious influences of the Holy Spirit, purchased by Christ for this purpose, that we might be enabled to serve the living God in a lively manner. This effectually purges the most guilty conscience from dead works to serve the living God; while the grace that seals the pardon, new creates the polluted soul.

Nothing is more destructive to the whole faith of the gospel, than by any means to weaken the immediate efficacy of the blood of Christ. Every opinion of that tendency breaks in on the whole mystery of the wisdom and grace of God in him. It renders all the institutions and sacrifices of the law, whereby God instructed the church of old in the mystery of his grace, useless and unintelligible, and overthrows the foundation of the gospel.—(52.)

As all things relative to the sacrifice of Christ are plainly and fully testified in the scriptures, so the way to come to a blessed satisfaction in them, to the due use and comfort of them, is not to consult the cavils of carnal wisdom, but to pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, would give us the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, in the knowledge of him, that, the eyes of our understanding being enlightened, we may come to the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ. The depth of this mystery we cannot dive into, the height we cannot comprehend. We cannot search out the greatness of it, of the wisdom, the love, the grace that is in it. And those who choose rather to reject it, than to live by faith in humble admiration of it, do it at the peril of their souls. In the consideration of the nature, dignity, and efficacy of the sacrifice of Christ, faith finds life, food, and refreshment. Here it contemplates the wisdom, the righteousness, the holiness and grace of God; here it views the wonderful condescension and love of Christ, and is strengthened and encouraged.—(53.)

14. "Deadly works," having a deadly, destructive, condemning power. This may be the meaning, or in reference to ver. 13, dead works may mean sinful works, such as pollute the soul, as dead bodies did the persons of the Jews, who touched them.—*Stuart*.

Ver. 15—22. The gospel is here considered as a testament, the new and last will and testament of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. The solemn transactions between God and man are sometimes called a covenant, here a testament, which is a voluntary act and deed of a single person, bestowing legacies on such legatees as are described and characterized by the testator, and which can only take effect upon his death. Christ is the Mediator of a new testament, ver. 15, and he is so: 1. To redeem persons from their transgressions against the law or first testament, which makes every transgression a forfeiture of liberty, and makes men debtors who need to be redeemed. 2. To qualify all who are effectually called, to receive the promise of an eternal inheritance. These are the great legacies Christ has bequeathed. He might be considered as having acquired in his mediatorial office a right to dispose of spiritual and eternal blessings. Thus he died, not only to acquire the blessings of salvation for us, but to give efficacy to the disposal of them. There seems peculiar propriety in the illustration of this subject, by every idea, that the word, which may be rendered both covenant and testament, can convey to the mind, that the necessity and the benefit of the death of Christ may be shown in every view the subject can admit.

Two important facts are reasoned upon. 1. That from the fall of Adam to the end of the world, no man will be pardoned but through Christ's having offered himself to God as a sacrifice for sin. 2. That although Christ offered himself only once, and at the conclusion of the mosaic dispensation, that one offering has such efficacy in procuring pardon for the penitent, that its influence reaches backwards to the beginning of the world, and forwards to the end of time, on which account Christ is termed, Rev. 13. 8, the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.—(75.)

Where a testament is, where it acts and operates, there must of necessity be the death of the testator, ver. 16; till then no estate, no right, is conveyed and effectual. Neither was the first testament ratified without blood, ver. 18, 19. All by sin were become guilty before God, had forfeited their inheritance, their liberties, and their very lives;

but God, willing to show the greatness of his mercy, proclaimed a covenant of grace, ordered it to be typically administered under the Old Testament, and accepted the blood of bulls and goats, as typifying the blood of Christ. By these the covenant of grace was ratified under the former dispensation.

The method taken by Moses according to the direction he had received from God, is here particularly related. He spake every precept to all the people, according to the law, ver. 19. He published to them the tenour of the covenant; the duties required, the rewards promised, and the punishment for transgressors. Then he took the blood and applied it by sprinkling the book of the law and covenant; showing that the covenant of grace is confirmed by the blood of Christ, and made effectual to our good. Also he sprinkled the people; intimating that shedding the blood of Christ will be no advantage to us, if it is not applied to us. And the sprinkling both the book and the people, signified the ratification of the covenant of grace to all true believers. He sprinkled the tabernacle and all the utensils of it, intimating that all the sacrifices offered up, and services performed there, were accepted only through the blood of Christ, which procures the remission of that iniquity which cleaves to our holy things, and could not have been remitted but by that atoning blood. *Nothing could be clean to a sinner, not even his religious duties; except as his guilt was expiated by the death of a sacrifice of sufficient value for that end, and unless he continually depended upon it.

May we then receive all our hopes and blessings as the purchase of the agonizing, yet voluntary death of our gracious Saviour; the legacy of his dying love, and the gift of his royal munificence to rebellious creatures. May we ascribe even our sanctification and all our real good works to the same all-procuring cause, and offer our spiritual sacrifices as sprinkled with his blood, and so purified from their defilement.

15. *Scholefield* says, We are now arrived at a passage, perhaps the most perplexing in the New Testament. The question is, whether the word here rendered "testament," should not be rendered "covenant." In ch 7. 22, it is rendered "testament," as also in Matt 26. 28. All through ch. 8, and in ver. 4 of the present chapter it is

"covenant;" but in these verses it is changed back to "testament"—of course in the sense of a will. Compare especially ch. 12. 24. Waiving the question whether the more general term, "dispensation," do or do not better express the meaning of the word, the inquiry is, whether the dispensation is to be regarded as a testament, or as a covenant, so as to comprehend rightly the apostle's argument. *Scholefield* comes to the conclusion that the word ought to be rendered "covenant," though there are difficulties in the way of this interpretation. He renders the passage, "And for this end he is the Mediator of the new covenant," that, his death having taken place for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, they that are called might receive the promise of the eternal inheritance. For where a covenant is, there must of necessity be brought in the death of the mediating sacrifice. For a covenant is valid over dead sacrifices, since it is never of any force while the mediating sacrifice continues alive." *Scholefield* states the reasons for this rendering, and adds, "In one sense, Moses was the mediator of the old covenant and so a type of Christ; but not in that sense which required the death of the mediator, which is clearly the sense required, ver. 15. In that sense the sacrifices were the types of Christ."

Faber has gone very fully into the consideration of this passage. He shows that the rules of composition require that the word here in question, is used by the apostle in the same sense as the self same word is used in the context, both before and after it, that is, to denote a covenant. The sum of this reasoning is—All covenants are ratified over a sacrifice, and are valid only over dead victims; for they are no way binding while the ratifier is living. But the levitical and christian dispensations are each a covenant between God and man. Therefore each of those covenants must have been ratified over a sacrifice.

Stade would consider that the apostle takes advantage of the two-fold sense of the word, intimating it as applicable to the christian dispensation, not only as denoting a covenant, but also in its general acceptance of a testament. See also notes ch. 7. 22; 8. 8.

Ver. 23—28. Here is shown the necessity that the heavenly things themselves should be purified with better sacrifices than those of bulls and goats. These heavenly things are the privileges of the gospel state, begun in grace, perfected in glory; these must be ratified by a suitable sanction or consecration; and that was the blood of Christ. It is evident that the sacrifices of Christ are infinitely better than those of the law. 1. From the places in which the sacrifices were offered. Those under the law were the holy places made with hands, which are but figures of the true sanctuary. Christ's sacrifice, though offered upon earth, was by himself carried up into heaven, and is there presented in daily intercession for us. 2. From the sacrifices themselves. Those

under the law were the blood of beasts, but the sacrifice of Christ was the oblation of himself; he offered his own blood, truly called the blood of God, by virtue of the union with the Divine nature; and therefore of infinite value. 3. From the frequent repetition of the legal sacrifices. This showed the imperfection of that law; but it is the honour and perfection of Christ's sacrifice, that, being once offered, it was sufficient to the end of it; but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared, to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself; otherwise Christ must often have suffered since the first entrance of sin, soon after the foundation of the world, when the efficacy of his interposition for sinners began. The gospel is the last dispensation of the grace of God to men. 4. From the inefficacy of the legal sacrifices, and the efficacy of Christ's sacrifice, the legal sacrifices could not of themselves put away sin; neither procure pardon for it, nor power against it. Sin would still have lain upon us, and had dominion over us; but Jesus Christ by one sacrifice has made an end of sin, he has destroyed the works of the devil, that believers may be made righteous, holy, and happy; thus vast was the value and efficacy of his one oblation.

The appointment of God concerning men is, that they must once die, or undergo a change equivalent to death. It is an awful thing to die, to have all relations here dropped at once, an end put to our preparation-state, and to enter into another world. It is a great work, and it is a work that can be but once done, and therefore had need to be well done. This is matter of comfort to the godly, but it is matter of terror to the wicked, who die in their sins. It is appointed to men, that after death they shall come to judgment; for the soul returns to God as to its Judge, to be determined as to its eternal state. This is the unalterable decree of God, concerning men—they must die, and they must be judged. It is appointed for them, and it is to be believed and seriously considered by them.

The appointment of God concerning Christ, is, that He must be once offered, to bear the sins of many, of all the Father had given to him, of all who believe in his name. He was not offered

for any sin of his own, he was wounded for our transgressions. God laid on him the iniquity of all his people; and these are many. At his first appearance, though he had no sin of his own, yet he stood charged with the sins of many; but his second appearance will be without any such charge upon him, and exceedingly glorious. This will be to the salvation of all who look for him, he will then perfect their holiness, their happiness; their number shall then be accomplished, and their salvation completed. It is the distinguishing character of true believers, that they are looking for Christ; they look to him by faith; they look for him by hope and holy desires. They now look for him in every duty, in every ordinance, in every providence; and they expect his second coming, and are preparing for it; and though it will be sudden destruction to the rest of the world, it will be eternal salvation to them. As no wisdom, learning, virtue, wealth, or power, can exempt one of the human race from the sentence of death, so nothing can deliver a sinner from condemnation at the day of judgment, except an interest in the atoning sacrifice of Christ; nor will one be saved from eternal punishment who despises or neglects this great salvation.

The believer knows that his Redeemer liveth, and that he shall see him. While he is thus invisible, the world triumphs, as though he were not. The faith of many is weak; they cannot live upon his invisible actings. But here is the faith and patience of the church, of all sincere believers. In the midst of all discouragements, reproaches, temptations, sufferings, they can relieve and comfort their souls with this, that their Redeemer liveth, and that he shall appear the second time, in his appointed season in glory, unto the judgment of all, when he shall finish and complete the eternal salvation of the church. Hence is their continual prayer as the fruit and expression of their faith, "Even so come, Lord Jesus,"—(52.)

26. Christ is here said to have been revealed at the confines of the ages; where the end of this age or world, and the beginning of that to come, as it were touch one another. A phrase which most exactly describes the time of the coming of the Messiah.—*J. P. Smith.*

CHAPTER X.

The main argument relating to the insufficiency of all sacrifices under the law for taking away sin, is closed, ver. 1—4. And also as to the necessity and efficacy of the sacrifice of Christ for that purpose, according to the tenor of the new covenant, which contains the substantial blessings the law was only the shadow of, 5—18.

The doctrinal part of the epistle being finished, the practical follows by way of inference from the preceding discourse, from which is drawn an argument for holy boldness in the believer's access to God through Jesus Christ, 19—22. And for steadfastness in the faith, and exciting to mutual love and duty, and to frequent assemblings together for religious worship, 23—25. They are warned of the danger of apostasy, 26—31. And reminded of their former illumination, and their suffering with patience and spiritual joy, 32—34. And encouraged to maintain their holy profession to the end of their days, 35—39.

Ver. 1—4. The apostle having shown that the tabernacle, priesthood, divine services, and temporal blessings of the covenant of Sinai, were only worldly emblematic representations of the spiritual and heavenly things of the gospel economy, infers that as the dispensation of the law, and particularly its sacrifices, had only a shadow of good things to come, and were not the real substance of them, so the sacrifices which the high priests offered continually, could not make the worshippers, for whom they were offered, perfect with respect to pardon and the purification of conscience.—(91.)

Could they have satisfied the demands of justice, and made reconciliation for iniquity; could they have purified and pacified the conscience; then they had ceased, as being no further necessary; since the offerers would have had no more sin lying upon their consciences. But this was not the case; after one day of atonement was over, there still was need of another day of atonement, and of one every year, beside the daily ministrations. Whereas now, under the gospel, the atonement is perfect, and not to be repeated.

This is the privilege of christians, for believers, once pardoned, are perfectly justified and accepted unto eternal life. They are no more brought under condemnation, they continually apply, in the exercise of penitent faith, the unfailling

efficacy of the atonement to their consciences; thus they preserve inward peace, with humility and tenderness of conscience, notwithstanding the remains of sin in their hearts. The sacrifices of bulls and goats might be an acknowledgment of guilt and profession of repentance, but they could not render pardoning mercy in its full exercise consistent with the infinite justice and holiness of God, without which nothing can take away sin. If we consider the most exalted of mere creatures willingly assuming our nature, to suffer temporal death in the most severe form for our salvation, we must perceive the atonement would be of very small value compared with the guilt to be pardoned, nor could it consist with the perfect justice of God to pass by the guilt of so many for such a consideration. But when "God manifested in the flesh," became the sacrifice, and his death upon the accursed tree the ransom, then, the sufferer being of infinite dignity, his voluntary sufferings were of infinite value. Such a sacrifice would suffice for the sins of the whole world, if all men were willing to come to God by it. And it is well to remember that God appointed the sacrifices under the law, as well as that of his Son, yet it was not possible for the former to take away sin, but the latter effected it because of its intrinsic value.

The legal sacrifices did not of themselves take away sin, and it was impossible they should do so, ver. 4. They were not of sufficient value to make satisfaction for the affronts done to the justice and government of God. The atoning sacrifice must be one capable of consenting, and must voluntarily substitute himself in the sinner's stead: Christ did so.

3. The Jew, in his solemn commemoration of sin by renewed sacrifices, professed, 1. That no sacrifice, formerly offered, was sufficient to expiate his sin, or cleanse his conscience. 2. That he had not sufficiently holden by faith, that signified Sacrifice which was to come, but needed through the typical sacrifices, to take a new view of it. But we, by remembering our sins, and not sacrificing, profess that the Divine justice is so well satisfied, by Christ's sacrifice already past, that we need no new sacrifice, nor desire any other ransom than Christ's; but crave to have, by faith, a better hold of Christ who paid the ransom for us, that we may find the virtue of his ransom more and more in ourselves.—*Dickson*.

Ver. 5—10. The apostle referred the

Hebrews to a remarkable prophecy of the Messiah, which showed from the inefficacy of the sacrifices that his coming was necessary. When Jehovah had no satisfaction in the offerings under the law, Christ declared his readiness to come into the world in human nature, to procure pardon for sinners, as it had been written of him in the book of God's word. The contrast between the sacrifices in which Jehovah had no pleasure, and the obedience of Christ, in which he would be fully satisfied, was an evident intimation that he intended to remove the former, and establish the latter in its full glory, as the only ground of sinners being pardoned and saved. By this will of God, perfectly performed by Christ, in his obedience to death upon the cross, Christians were sanctified and consecrated to God, as accepted and spiritual worshippers; through the offering of his body once for sin, with which his mediatorial obedience had been completed.

Christ came to do the will of God in taking away the first priesthood, not only taking away the curse of the covenant of works, and cancelling the sentence denounced against us as sinners, but taking away the insufficient typical priesthood, blotting out the hand-writing of ceremonial ordinances, and nailing it to his cross. And in establishing the second; that is, the pure perfect dispensation of the covenant of grace. The fountain of all Christ has done for his people, is the sovereign will and grace of God. And we partake of what Christ has done for us, by being sanctified, converted, effectually called, wherein we are united to Christ, and so partake of the benefits of his redemption; and this sanctification is owing to the oblation he made of himself to God. The righteousness brought in, and the sacrifice once offered by Christ, are of eternal efficacy, and his salvation shall never be abolished. They suffice to make all the comers thereunto perfect. The worshippers, once cleansed by his atoning blood, need seek no other sacrifice, but daily applying to the great propitiation, they derive from it strength and motives for obedience, and inward comfort.

5. Christ's coming into the world, in scripture phrase, means his descending from heaven to be with us, John 16. 28, and his going hence to heaven, is styled his leaving the world, John 13. 1; 16. 28; 17. 11. The connexion of it here

with the time when a body was prepared for him, will not suffer us to doubt that it imports his assumption of the human nature, and his being born into the world in it.—*Whitby*.

6. This quotation varies from Ps. 40 6. *Quay* considers the apostle gives the sense of the passage rather than the exact words. *Kennicott* shows that a very slight change in some of the hebrew letters for others similar, will give the same sense in the hebrew Old Testament as in the septuagint, which is quoted in the New Testament. *Talpy* says, Some are of opinion that the passage in the hebrew was originally the same as is now in the greek, but that the jews altered the words to diminish the evidence they gave to christianity. But whichever expression we adopt, the implied sense is the same, and the passage clearly refers to the sacrifice of the body of Christ. *McLean* observes that it is not likely the apostle in writing to the Hebrews would have quoted the passage different from the hebrew text then in their hands. *Bloomfield* considers that all the attempts to produce coincidence have been more or less unsuccessful, but that *Stuart* well shows the circumstance adverted to in the words, "a body hast thou prepared," are not essential, and as the apostle had occasion to quote the passage from the septuagint for another purpose, he was justified in retaining the words he found there, especially as they did not impede the purpose in view; namely by turning the minds of his readers to Christ, who, in his incarnation, became the true expiatory sacrifice, of which the sacrifices in the law were but types and symbols.

Ver. 11—18. Every priest of Aaron's order, offered repeatedly the same sacrifices. And the high-priest did so every year on the day of atonement. But Christ, after the willing offering of himself, as one Sacrifice of infinite value and eternal efficacy, sat down upon his throne at the right hand of God, from that time waiting the fulfilment of the prophecy and promise which engaged that all his enemies should be put under his feet. His one oblation of himself, provided effectually for the perfect justification unto eternal life of all who were interested in his atonement, by that faith which springs from regeneration, and is evidenced by the sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience; and were thus set apart for the service of God. To this the Holy Ghost had borne testimony in the scripture before quoted, from Jer. 31. When the laws of God are written in the heart, every kind and degree of sin will be for ever pardoned. For Christ, by his one offering, hath perfected for ever those who are sanctified, and where such perfect remission is vouchsafed, there needs no more sacrifice for sins.

Under the new covenant or gospel dispensation absolute and final pardon is

to be obtained. This makes a vast difference between the new covenant and the old one. Under the *old*, sacrifices must be perpetually repeated, and after all, only civil and ecclesiastical pardon was to be obtained by them. Under the *new*, one sacrifice is sufficient, and avails to procure for all nations and all ages, spiritual pardon or remission of the penalty threatened to be inflicted in a future world. Well might this be called a *new* covenant.—(97)

Most certain it is from the preceding passages, that God will not pardon any transgression without such a sacrifice as can really expiate its guilt. And if the sacrifices which were of God's own appointment, could not take away sin because they could not satisfy the demands of Divine justice, let none suppose that human inventions, self-imposed penances, prayers, tears, amendment, moral virtues and alms-deeds, can avail those who put them in the place of the sacrifice of the Son of God; for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ died in vain. What then remains but that we seek an interest in this Sacrifice by faith; and the seal of it to our souls, by the sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience? That by the law being written in our hearts, we may know that we are perfectly justified, and that God will no more remember our sins and iniquities.

Ver. 19—22. The apostle having closed the argumentative part of the epistle, the doctrine is applied to practical purposes. As believers had liberty and free access into the immediate presence of God, it behoved them to make use of this privilege. They may enter into the gracious presence of God in his ordinances, providences, and covenant, and so into communion with God, where they receive communications from him, till they enter into his glorious presence in heaven. The way and means by which christians enjoy such privileges, is by the blood of Jesus, by the merit of that blood which he offered up to God as an atoning sacrifice. This blood, being sprinkled on the conscience, chases away slavish fear, and gives the believer assurance, both of his safety, and his welcome into the Divine presence. They now might have access

to the holiest by a new way : for the original way of acceptance and communion with God, through the righteousness of works, had been shut up by the entrance of sin. It is a living way, as Jesus ever liveth to intercede before the throne of God for us ; as the way itself gives life as it were to those that come in it, and as it leads to eternal life. This way Christ hath consecrated for us, that we may come to God upon the mercy-seat, through the holy place, that is, his flesh. The agreement of infinite holiness with pardoning mercy, was not clearly understood till the human nature of Christ, the Son of God, was wounded and bruised for our sins ; then the veil was rent, a just God and a Saviour was openly revealed to mankind, displaying his glory from the mercy-seat, and exercising grace to sinners, in a manner honourable to his infinite purity. Our way to heaven is by a crucified Saviour ; his death is to us the way of life ; to those who believe this, he will be precious. They must draw near to God ; since such a way of access and return to God is opened, it would be the greatest ingratitude and contempt of God and Christ, still to keep at a distance from him. They must draw near to the Lord, with fervent desires, large expectations, and with continual prayers and thanksgivings. This must be with full sincerity, as truly sorrowing for sin, as upright worshippers, in full assurance of faith, firmly believing that God would accept all who came to him in his appointed way.

We should lay aside all sinful distrust ; without faith we cannot please God : and having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience by a believing application of the blood of Christ to our souls. They may be cleansed from guilt, from sinful fear and torment, from aversion to God and duty, from ignorance, and error, and superstition, allowance of known sin, and whatever evils the consciences of men are subject to by reason of sin. Their bodies were to be washed with pure water, alluding to the cleansings and washings directed under the law, and thus the use of water in baptism was to be a constant memorial to christians that their conduct should be pure and holy before men, as well as their hearts and con-

sciences cleansed in the sight of God. Thus they would approve themselves to be spiritual worshippers, and while they derived comfort and grace from their reconciled Father into their own souls, they would adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour in all things.

Let us not stand at a distance, or turn away from Him who beseeches us to be reconciled ; let us beware of hypocrisy, that we may draw near with a true heart ; let us watch and pray against unbelief ; let us apply his blood to cleanse us from guilt, and seek his promised grace to cleanse us from the sins of the flesh, that we may walk henceforth in newness of life.

20 The veil, as one of the boundaries of the tabernacle, in a natural sense belonged to it ; and as the passage relates to our Lord's death, the veil, the symbol of the Messiah's human nature, is very fitly introduced, marking the transition out of life into another state.—*J. P. Smith.* See note, ch. 8. 2.

22. Here seems to be a plain allusion to the use of water in the initiatory rite of christian baptism—but no particular stress is to be laid on the mere external rite of washing the body ; for the connexion shows, that the whole is designed to point out the spiritual qualifications of sincere christians for access to God. But the manner of expression turns wholly upon a comparison with the Jewish rites.—*Stuart.*

Ver. 23—25. Though the full assurance of hope could not always be a duty, or always attainable, yet believers must not allow themselves to doubt the truth of God's testimony, or his faithfulness to his promises. And the apostle called upon them to unite with him in holding fast the profession of their faith and hope in Christ, without wavering, faltering, or shrinking from the results to which it might lead. Having once settled the great things between God and our souls, we must be steadfast and immovable. They who begin to waver in matters of christian faith and practice, are in danger of falling away. God has made great and precious promises to believers, and he is a faithful God, true to his word ; there is no falseness or fickleness with him, and there should be none with us. We must depend more upon his promises to us than upon our promises made with him, and we must plead with him the promise of sufficient grace. And they were to consider how they could be of service to each other, especially stimulating to the more vigorous and abundant exercise of love,

and the practice of good works. And affectionately considering their several wants, weaknesses, and temptations not to reproach one another, but calling upon themselves and one another to love God and Christ more, and to love duty and holiness more, to love their brethren in Christ more, and to do all the good offices of christian affection to the bodies and the souls of each other. Some through fear or indifference declined attendance on public worship; but on the contrary they should exhort to constancy and diligence in honouring God, and seeking to edify fellow-christians. This they should be the more resolute to perform, as they must plainly see the signs of the approaching destruction of Jerusalem, as foretold by our Lord.

The communion of saints is a great help and privilege, and a means of steadiness and perseverance. We should observe the approaching of times of trial, and be thereby quickened to greater diligence. There was a day approaching, a terrible day to the jewish nation, when their city should be destroyed, and the body of the people rejected of God, for rejecting Christ. This would be a day of dispersion and temptation to the chosen remnant. The apostle urges them to observe what signs there were of the approach of such a terrible day, and to be the more constant in meeting together and exhorting one another, that they might be the better prepared for such a day. There is a trying day coming on us all, the day of our death, and we should observe all the signs of its approaching, and improve them by greater watchfulness and diligence in duty. Against such evils we should exhort others, and gladly suffer exhortation ourselves.

25. *Bloomfield* quotes the following remark from *Gibbon*, "The devotion of the poet or the philosopher, may be secretly nourished by prayer, meditation, or study; but the exercise of public worship appears to be the only solid foundation of the religious sentiments of the people." *Bloomfield* adds, "It conveys an important truth which ought to make those pause who seek by ingenious sophistry, to desecrate the christian sabbath, silently depreciating the inestimable advantages it holds out, to those especially who have to labour, whether with body or mind, to provide for the day which passes over their heads."

Ver. 26—31. After having mentioned the means of establishment, the apostle proceeds to enforce his exhortations

to perseverance and against apostasy, by many weighty considerations. The Hebrews would be tempted to apostasy not only by persecution but by their own undue attachment to the sacrifices. So long as they supposed these would take away sin, they might hope for safety in renouncing christianity, so escaping persecution, and thus sin wilfully after they had received the knowledge of the truth, ver. 26. This text has been the occasion of great distress to some gracious souls: they have been ready to conclude that every willing sin, after conviction and against knowledge, is the unpardonable sin; but this has been their error. The sin here mentioned is a total and final apostasy, when men, with a full and fixed will and resolution, despise and reject Christ the only Saviour; despise and resist the Spirit, the only Sanctifier; and despise and renounce the gospel, the only way of salvation, and the words of eternal life; and all this, after they have known, owned, and professed the christian religion; which they now renounce obstinately and maliciously. This is the great transgression: the apostle seems to refer to the law concerning presumptuous sinners, Numb. 15. 30, 31. They were to be cut off.

There remains no more sacrifice for such sins; no other Christ to come to save such; they sin against the last resort and remedy. Those under the gospel, who will not accept of Christ, that they may be saved by him, have no other refuge. The legal sacrifices had lost all their power to avert even national judgments since the death of Christ, nor could any attention to those rites procure respite from the approaching miseries, whereby the jewish nation were devoted to speedy destruction, for crucifying the Messiah and rejecting his gospel: and the apostates wilfully chose their portion with that accursed generation, after having received the knowledge of the truth. There remains only a certain fearful looking for of judgment, ver. 27. This probably refers partly to the dreadful destruction of the jewish church and state; but certainly it refers also to the utter destruction that waits for all obstinate apostates at death and judgment, when the Judge will discover a fiery indignation against them. Of this destruction God gives some notorious sinners, while on earth, a fearful

foreboding in their consciences, with despair of being able to endure or escape it. But here seems a reference to the desperate rage and fury shown by some of the jews in the midst of their miseries, and this might be expected among apostates from christianity who had done violence to their own conviction, and sinned against knowledge with presumptuous enmity, when they saw matters coming to the extremity Christ had foretold.

Those who despised Moses' law, and sinned presumptuously, when convicted by two or three witnesses, were put to death without mercy. Thus God ordained in Moses' law; hence the apostle infers the heavy doom to fall upon those that apostatized from Christ. They have trodden under foot the Son of God. To trample upon his person, denying him to be the Messiah; to trample upon his authority, and undermine his kingdom; to trample upon his members as the off-scouring of all things—what punishment can be too great for such? They have counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing. Men may be distinguished by common gifts and graces; by an outward profession; by a form of godliness; a course of duties, and a set of privileges, and yet fall away. Men who have seemed to have the blood of Christ in high esteem, may come to account it an unholy thing, no better than the blood of a malefactor, though it was the world's ransom and of infinite value.

They have done despite unto the Spirit of grace; the Spirit that is graciously given to men, and that works grace wherever it is; the Spirit of grace, that should always receive the greatest regard. This Spirit they have grieved, resisted, yea done despite to him; which makes the case of the sinner desperate; by his refusing to have the gospel salvation applied to him, and, above all, ascribing Christ's miraculous powers to Satanic agency. Ought not such aggravated crimes to receive a suitable punishment, a sorer punishment than those who died without mercy? But what punishment can be sorer than to die *without* mercy? We answer, to die *by* mercy, *by* the mercy and grace which they have despised. How dreadful is the case, when not only the justice of God, but his abused grace and mercy, call for vengeance!

Vengeance is mine, ver. 30. This is from Ps. 94. 1. The terrors of the Lord are known both by revelation and reason. Vindictive justice is a glorious, though terrible attribute of God, and he will use and execute it upon apostates who despise his grace. And how dreadful then will their case be! The other quotation is from Deut. 32. 36. The Lord will judge his people; he will search and try his visible church, and he will separate the precious from the vile. Those who know him who hath said, Vengeance belongeth to me, I will recompense, must conclude as the apostle did. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God, ver. 31. Those who know the joy that results from the favour of God thereby judge of the power and dreadfulness of his wrath.

The greatest misery will be, the immediate impressions of Divine wrath on the soul. When God punishes by creatures, the instrument abates something of the force of the blow; but when he does it by his own hand, it is infinite misery. And he is a living God, he lives for ever, and will punish for ever. All this does not in the least imply that any soul sorrowing for sin will be shut out from mercy, or refused the benefit of Christ's sacrifice, if earnestly sought. The persons spoken of are adversaries, which none of the penitent can be called. Nor could this passage be written to discourage such. It cannot have anything to do with the case of any in these days, who may once have doubted the truth of christianity, or have denied it, though they now think highly of that salvation, and would gladly partake of it. Even when the gospel has been renounced after light and knowledge, the apostasy cannot be fatal, unless it is final. None are excluded from mercy, and redemption by Christ, who are willing to accept of these blessings. Him that cometh unto Christ he will in no wise cast out, whatever his sins may have been.

26—31. See the note at the end of this chapter.

29. Wherewith he was sanctified, seems to relate to Christ who was consecrated to his priestly office by his own blood, for the Son of God is the immediate antecedent.—*Guyse*.

— The personality of the Holy Spirit is clearly set forth in this verse, and cannot be lowered or explained away.—*See Bloomfield*.

Ver. 32—39. The apostle presses to perseverance, by putting the Hebrews in mind of their former sufferings for

Christ, ver. 32. In the early days of the gospel, there was very hot persecution against the professors of the christian religion, and the believing Hebrews had their share. Observe, a natural state is a dark state, and those who continue in that state meet with no disturbance from Satan and the world; but a state of grace is a state of light, therefore the powers of darkness will violently oppose it. Those who will live godly in Christ Jesus must suffer persecution.

Many and various afflictions united together against them, and they had a great conflict therewith. Some were made public spectacles by the contempt and cruelties inflicted upon them, while others were companions of those who thus suffered, and witnessed what they had to endure. The christian spirit is a sympathizing spirit, not a selfish spirit; it puts us upon pitying others, visiting them, helping them, and pleading for them. And some whom the apostle addressed had formerly shown compassion to him when imprisoned, and when their property was taken away, they bore it joyfully, having abundant consolation from the assurance, that they had in heaven a better and a more enduring substance. The happiness of the saints in heaven is substantial. All things here are but shadows. It is an enduring substance, it will last to eternity; enemies can never take it away as they did earthly goods. This will make rich amends for all we can lose and suffer here. Christians should seek to have the assurance of this in themselves, the Spirit of God witnessing with their spirits; for the assured knowledge of this will help them to endure any afflictions in this world.

They are pressed to persevere, from the recompense of reward that waited for all faithful christians, ver. 35. He encourages them by assuring them their holy confidence would carry a present reward, in holy peace and joy, and much of God's presence and power; and it shall have great recompense of reward hereafter. He shows how necessary the grace of patience is in our present state, ver. 36. The greatest part of the saints' happiness is as yet in promise. It is a trial of the patience of christians, to be content to live after their work is done, and to stay for the reward till God's time to give it them is come. We must be

God's waiting servants, when we can be no longer his working servants; those who have had and exercised much patience already, must have and exercise more till they die. To help their patience, they are assured of the near approach of Christ's coming to deliver and to reward them, ver. 37. He will soon come to them at death, to end all their sufferings, and give them a crown of life. He will soon come to judgment, and end the sufferings of the whole church, and give an ample and glorious reward. The christian's present conflict may be sharp, but will be soon over.

They are pressed to perseverance, by telling them that this is their distinguishing character, and will be their happiness; whereas apostasy brings reproach and ruin, ver. 38, 39. It is the honourable character of just men, that in times of the greatest afflictions, they can live by faith; upon the assured persuasion they have of the truth of God's promises. Apostasy is the mark and the brand of those in whom God takes no pleasure: and it is a cause of God's severe displeasure and anger. God never was pleased with the formal profession and external duties and services of such as do not persevere; he beholds them with great displeasure.

The apostle declares his good hope concerning himself and these Hebrews, that they should not forfeit the character and happiness of the just, and fall under the brand and misery of the wicked, ver. 39. Those who have been kept faithful in great trials for the time past, have reason to hope for the same grace to help them still to live by faith, till they receive the end of their faith and patience, even the salvation of their souls. Living by faith, and dying in faith, our souls are safe for ever. Let us then show that we are justified through faith, by living and walking with God in dependence on his promises, and in obedience to his commands, satisfied with the security of his word. Thus we shall possess the assurance that we are not of those who draw back unto perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul.

32, 33. The original is very emphatical; being openly exposed, as on a public stage, to ignominious insults and to the last cruelties; alluding to the malefactors condemned to be devoured by wild beasts in the theatres.—T. H. Horne.

38. "The just by faith shall live."—Owen.

ON THE FATAL CONSEQUENCES OF DISREGARDING THE GOSPEL.

28-29. The apostle, clearly, is here speaking of apostates. It cannot be on every wilful sin that he pronounces the awful denunciation here recorded; but the wilful desertion of the truth and people of God—the forsaking of the public assemblies, under the influence of the fear or the love of the world. This involved the abandonment of hope in the last, and now the only remaining, Sacrifice for sin. Juda sm, with all its sacrifices, could afford no remedy to such; the virtue of all its provisions was extinguished for ever; the blood of its victims might now be shed and applied in vain. For the despoiler of the mosaic law, that law made no provision of mercy; because it provided no atonement for the men who renounced it. For the despoiler of the gospel, christianity provides no remedy. The man who treads under foot the Son of God, who treats as a profane thing the blood of the covenant, and who insults the Spirit of God, must be left to that indignation which shall devour all its adversaries. Here again, it is evident, what is the ground of the sinner's exclusion from mercy. It is not the mere enormity of his offence, dreadfully aggravated as it is; but his final impenitence, and his deliberate rejection of the glorious remedy. The only antidote to the ban of his nature is refused; his eye is closed against, not the feeble ray, but the full blaze of the Divine mercy; and his soul having once professed to appreciate, at last loathes, God's unspeakable gift.—*Orme.*

To sin wilfully, does not mean every sin which we commit with the consent of our will, for it would be hard to mention any sin in which the will is not more or less concerned. We find in scripture many of the approved children of God falling into such sins as necessarily implied a consent of the will for the time: yet they are not said to sin wilfully.—Thus Paul in unbelief, 1 Tim. 1. 13, Peter, through fear, Matt. 26. 74. The expression seems to refer to Num. 15. 30, 31, where it is described as doing aught presumptuously—but the apostle shows that to sin wilfully against the gospel is a more heinous sin, and deserves sorer punishment than was inflicted on those who despised Moses' law, ver. 29.—*M'Lean.*

To sin wilfully or willingly, plainly implies that this be done, 1. Not upon a sudden surprial and temptation, as Peter denied Christ. 2. Not on those compulsions and fears which may work a present dissimulation, without an internal rejection of the gospel. 3. Not through darkness, or ignorance making an impression for a season on the minds and reasonings of men; which things, though exceedingly evil and dangerous, may befall those who yet contract not the guilt of this crime.—*Owen.*

The main object of the sacred writer had been to convince his fellow-countrymen that there was no real efficacy in their ancient sacrifices, that they were but typical of Christ, consequently their value and obligation were now entirely at an end. He proceeds, from ver. 19, to practical exhortations, and here warns those who have been convinced by his reasonings, against doing violence to their convictions. The substance of his warning may be thus expressed; "Let no motives of worldly interest or fear, induce you to renounce the faith of Christ, if you already profess it; or to withhold your consent to his doctrine and service, if you have

hitherto been in doubt. Let fears of a more awful kind influence your determinations. Look to the eternal consequences of drawing back after your judgments have been convinced. If, after receiving the knowledge of the truth, you refuse your hearty assent to it, this will now be a wilful sin, carrying with it, its own condemnation. Not that it is unpardonable, if you sincerely renounce and forsake it; while life continues, Christ is at all times willing to receive you back into his fold. But, by this sin, you exclude yourself, rejecting Christ, you reject the only means of salvation:—For this once, a change is made, in the sacrifice appointed by the Lord; the blood of bulls and goats has given place to that of his beloved Son. But you must look for no further alteration. Christ will, indeed, once again make his appearance on earth; not, however, as a Saviour, but as a Judge. The only prospect, therefore, now remaining for his unbelieving adversaries, is a fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which will speedily devour them."—The conduct so awfully reprobated by the apostle, is simply this: a continued and final disregard of the mercies offered in the gospel of Jesus Christ.—Let not the Jew imagine that because one alteration has been made in the sacrifice which God requires, he may therefore object with impunity that Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world, hoping for some new and easier salvation to be revealed hereafter. No such hope remains. Yet the very same folly is committed when men profess to trust in the mercy of God, even though they habitually disregard the gospel of Jesus Christ. But there is nothing here to lead us to suppose that there is some sin which for ever shuts a man out from mercy, even though he bitterly bewails, and heartily forsakes it. The apostle says, "There remaineth no more sacrifice for sins." He does not take away the Saviour already provided for us, he only bids us not to look for another. But why need the contrite mourner look for another? Were your guilt even as great as your fears represent it to be, it would be no bar to the exercise of his mercy. He that is content to accept of Christ as his Saviour and his King, shall find him able to save to the uttermost.—*J. Jewett.*

CHAPTER XI.

The nature and efficacy of faith described, ver. 1-3. And exemplified by instances from Abel to Noah, 4-7. By Abraham and his descendants, 8-19. By Jacob, Joseph, and the parents of Moses, 20-23. By Moses, the Israelites, and Rahab, 24-31. Other Old Testament believers, 32-38. The better state of believers under the gospel, 39, 40.

Ver. 1-3. Faith always has been the peculiar characteristic of God's servants, from the beginning of the world. In defining faith, all the variety of its actings in the whole of a believer's experience and conduct is taken in. Where the principle is implanted by the regenerating Spirit of God, it will cause the truth to

be received concerning justification by the sufferings and merits of Christ; it will also embrace the whole word of God, and expect its accomplishment as to all the extent in which he has spoken and promised. And the wisdom and goodness of God are peculiarly manifested in the appointment of faith to be the means of our interest in Christ for justification, and the efficacious principle of our obedience. It is the substance of things hoped for. And the same things that are the object of our hope, are the object of our faith. It is a firm persuasion and expectation, that God will perform all he has promised to us in Christ; and this persuasion is so strong, that it gives the soul a kind of possession and present enjoyment of those things; gives them a subsistence in the soul, by the first-fruits and foretastes of them. It is the evidence of things not seen. Faith demonstrates to the mind the reality of those things that cannot be discerned by the bodily eye. Faith is the firm assent of the soul to the Divine revelation, and every part of it, and sets to its seal that God is true. It is a full approval of all God has revealed, as holy, just, and good; it helps the soul to apply all to itself with suitable affections and endeavours; thus it is to the soul all that the senses are to the body. That faith, which does not realize invisible things to the soul, and excite the soul to act agreeably to their nature and importance is but opinion or fancy. Faith is the evidence, the internal conviction, the demonstration of all divine truths. To unbelievers they may appear doubtful, but believers receive them on God's testimony. God hath said it, and it must be true. This view of faith is illustrated by many examples, the apostle observing that by faith all their pious forefathers, and other eminent persons in former times, had obtained a good report, or an honourable character in the word of God. By faith they were justified; faith was the principle of all their holy obedience and eminent services, and patient sufferings. There is no operation of the human soul, which can possibly receive and profit by testimony, except faith, or believing.

The grace of faith looks not only forward to the end of the world, but back to the beginning of the world. By faith we understand more of the formation of

the world than ever could be understood by natural reason. Faith is not a force upon the understanding, but a friend and a help to it. Faith instructs us concerning the worlds—That they did not produce themselves, but were made by a Creator—That the Maker of the worlds is God—That he made the world with great exactness; in every thing duly adapted to answer its end, and to express the perfections of the Creator—That God made the world by his word, that is, by his essential wisdom, and by his active will, saying, Let it be done, and it was done, *Psa. 33. 9*—That the world was thus fliamed out of nothing, out of no pre-existent matter. These things we understand by faith. The Bible gives us the most true and exact account of the origin of all things, and we are to believe it, and not to wrest the scripture account of the creation, because it does not suit with the discordant views and endless disputations of philosophers, but strongly illustrates the proposition that faith is the evidence or demonstration of things not seen. We learn to adore and obey the Creator with humble, thankful, and admiring hearts, and believing his testimony concerning creation and providence, we receive his testimony also concerning the future judgment, and the eternal world. Believing that we are sinners exposed to, and deserving condemnation, according to the tenour of his righteous law, we gladly receive the truth concerning salvation by grace through the atoning blood of the Divine Saviour, and wait on him for pardon and every blessing, as his gift through Christ.

1. Faith, then, is vision of things unseen. And it brings the things that are not seen to the same fulness of assurance as the things that are seen.—*Chrysostom*.

— Faith is not the visible and tangible fruition of things present, but that which gives a substantial value to things as yet in remote futurity; it is that faculty of the mind by which we lay hold of the objects of the invisible world, as though they were actually subject to the perception of the bodily senses.—*Shuttleworth*.

— "Now faith is confidence in respect of things hoped for, and convincing evidence of things not seen."—Faith in the Divine word and promises, satisfies the mind respecting their reality and importance.—*Stuart*.

— "Now faith, by which the just live is the confidence of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen."—*M'Lean*.

— Let faith get a hold of the promise or word, and it takes hold of the thing promised by the root thereof.—*Lickson*.

— Guyse, with Owen and others, takes this

description of faith to include that which is justifying, but not under the strict notion of it, merely as justifying. For this is only as it has a regard to, and depends upon Christ and his righteousness; but here is no mention of him as the object of faith, and in several of the instances there is only notice taken of temporal blessings which were obtained by faith. Yet they may all be considered as so many proofs and evidences of the truth and efficacy of justifying faith in real believers on Christ, and of its more extensive exercise to the glory of God, and their own encouragement to go on in a course of dependence upon him, and obedience to him, amidst all the difficulties and dangers of every kind, that surround them in this sinful world. See also *M'Lean*.

—Although in the description, and over all the chapter, there are some things that agree to other faith than justifying faith, yet the general scope is principally of that faith which saves a man — *Perkins*.

3 "The things which are seen, were not made from those which do appear," that is, the visible tion was brought into existence by the word or command of God, and was not formed or fitted up out of pre-existing materials — *Stuart*.

Ver. 4—7. The apostle now proceeds to some illustrious examples of faith in the Old Testament. He begins with Abel. By faith he offered a more full and perfect sacrifice than Cain. After the fall, God was worshipped by sacrifices, a worship which is a confession of sin, of the desert of sin, and a profession of faith in a Redeemer, who was to be a ransom for the souls of men. From the beginning there has been a remarkable difference among worshippers. The first were brothers, but Abel acted under the power of faith; Cain only from the force of education, or natural conscience: and there was also a very observable difference in their offerings. Abel brought a sacrifice of atonement, of the firstlings of the flock, acknowledging himself a sinner who deserved to die, and only hoping for mercy through the great Sacrifice. Cain brought only an acknowledgment, a thank-offering, the fruit of the ground: here was no confession of sin, no regard to the Ransom; this was an essential defect in Cain's offering. There is a difference among those who worship the true God; some, like the pharisee, lean on their own righteousness; others, like the publican, confess their sin, and cast themselves upon the mercy of God in Christ.

God gave witness that Abel was righteous, a justified, sanctified, and accepted person, by testifying acceptance of his gifts, and rejected the offering of

Cain, whose proud rage and enmity against the accepted worshipper of God, produced the very same awful effects which the same principles have produced in every age—the cruel persecution, and even murder of believers. By faith Abel, being dead, yet speaketh, he has left us an instructive and speaking example; and what should we learn from it? That fallen man has leave to worship God, with hope of acceptance; that if our persons and offerings be accepted, it must be through faith in the Messiah — That acceptance with God is a distinguishing favour; that those who obtain this favour from God, must expect the envy and malice of the world; that God will not suffer the injuries done his people to remain unpunished, nor their sufferings unrewarded; and that God will raise up others, who shall obtain like precious faith.

Enoch, ver. 5. He was translated, that he should not see death; for God took him into heaven, as Christ will do those saints who shall be found alive at his second coming. He had walked with God for a long season; this was the effect of that faith by which he pleased Him. Those who by faith walk with God in a sinful world, are pleasing to him. But without faith it is impossible to please God, ver. 6, without such a faith as helps us to walk with God: an active faith; and we cannot come to God, unless we believe that he is what he is, what he has revealed himself to be in the scripture; and that he is a rewarder of those who diligently seek him. By the fall we have lost the Divine light, life, love, likeness, and communion. God is again to be found of us through Christ, the Second Adam. And he has prescribed means and ways wherein he may be found. Those who would find God, must seek him with all their heart; and this differs widely from mere assent to conjectures, or even being satisfied as to the existence of a God, without just notions of his character, will, and worship, with attempts to please him in ways of man's devising.

The faith of Noah, ver. 7. Observe, 1. The ground of Noah's faith—a warning from God of things as yet not seen; of a great judgment, nothing like which had yet happened, of which there was not the least sign. God warns before he strikes. 2. The influence it had

upon his mind and practice. Upon his mind; it impressed his soul with a holy awe; he was moved with fear of falling under God's displeasure. Faith first influences our affections, then our actions. His faith influenced his practice; moved him to prepare an ark. He expected that almighty power would execute the sentence denounced by infinite justice, and fulfil the word of unfailing truth. He did not dispute why he should make an ark, nor how it could contain what was to be lodged in it, nor how such a vessel could be preserved in the flood. Hereby himself and his house were saved, when a whole world of sinners were perishing about them. Hereby he judged and condemned the world; his holy fear condemned their security and vain confidence; his faith condemned their unbelief; his obedience their contempt and rebellion. Good examples either convert sinners or condemn them. There is something very convincing in a life of strict holiness and regard to God. This is the best way the people of God can take to condemn the wicked; not by harsh and censorious language, but by a holy exemplary conversation. He was possessed of a true justifying righteousness; he was heir to it: and thus his right of inheritance was through faith in Christ, as a member of Christ, a child of God, and if a child, then an heir. His righteousness resulted from his adoption, through faith in the promised Seed. This represents the manner in which believers, being warned of God to flee from the wrath to come, are moved with fear, take refuge in Christ, condemn the world, and become heirs of the righteousness of faith.

4. A greater or fuller sacrifice. Cain seems only to have presented a bunch, or thank offering of the fruits of the earth, without a victim, while Abel offered both, and by presenting a lamb as the firstling of his flock, showed his faith in the great sacrifice of the Lamb of God.—*Kennicott.*

Ver. 8—19. Observe, the faith of Abraham, the friend of God, and father of the faithful, of whom the Hebrews boasted, and from whom they derived their pedigree and privileges. Abraham's faith is more enlarged upon, than that of any other of the patriarchs.

1. The ground of Abraham's faith—the call and promise of God, ver. 8. This was an effectual call, by which he was converted from the idolatry of his father's

house, Gen. 12. 1. God calls us not only to leave sin, but to leave sinful company, and whatever is inconsistent with our devotedness to him. We have need to be called, not only to set out, but to go on well. We also are often called to leave worldly connexions, interests, and comforts, and to go in quest of a future inheritance. If heirs of Abraham's faith, we shall obey and go forth, though not knowing what may befall us; and we shall be found in the way of duty, looking for the performance of God's promises.

2. The exercise of Abraham's faith; he yielded implicit regard to the call of God. He put himself into the hand of God, to send him whithersoever he pleased. He subscribed to God's wisdom, as fittest to direct; and submitted to his will as fittest to determine every thing that concerned him. Canaan is called the land of promise, because yet only promised, not possessed. Abraham lived in Canaan as a sojourner only, living in daily readiness for removal: and thus should we all live in this world. Isaac and Jacob were heirs of the same promise. All the saints are heirs of the same promise. The promise is made to believers, and their children, and to as many as the Lord our God shall call.

3. The supports of Abraham's faith, ver. 10. Heaven is a city, a regular society, a city that has foundations, the unchangeable purposes and almighty power of God; the infinite merits and mediation of the Lord Jesus Christ; the promises of an everlasting covenant. Its Builder and Maker is God. He prepared it for his people, and he puts them into possession of it. Abraham believed there was such a state; he believed that in God's time and way he should be brought safely to it. This supported him under all the trials of his sojourning state.

Sarah's faith; she had gone out of the way of her duty through unbelief, and this sin would make it more difficult for her to act by faith afterward. Her unbelief is pardoned and forgotten, but her faith prevailed and is recorded, ver. 11. She received the promise as the promise of God; and being convinced of that, she truly judged that he both could and would perform it. Notice the fruits and rewards of her faith. She had a child of the promise, the comfort

of his parents' advanced years, and the hope of future ages. From them, by this son, sprang a great, powerful, and renowned nation, the peculiar church and people of God; of these, according to the flesh, the Messiah came, who is over all, God blessed for evermore.

The apostle proceeds to mention the faith of the other patriarchs, Isaac and Jacob, ver. 13. Observe, their faith was tried by the imperfection of their present state. They had not received the things promised; had not been put into possession of Canaan; had not seen Christ in the flesh. Many, interested in the promises, do not soon receive the things promised. But though they had not received the promises, they saw them afar off. Abraham saw Christ's day, and rejoiced. They were persuaded the promises were true, and should be fulfilled. They embraced them. Faith can lay hold of blessings at a great distance; can make them present; can love them, and rejoice in them. They confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on earth. Strangers, as saints, whose home is heaven; pilgrims, as travelling toward their home. They were not ashamed to own this their condition; they expected little from the world: they cared not to engage much in it; they endeavoured to mind their way, bearing difficulties, and longing to get home. They died believing that all the promises should be fulfilled to them and theirs. That faith held out to the last. By faith they overcame the terrors of death, and bade a cheerful farewell to this world, and to all the comforts and crosses of it. Hereby they declared plainly that they sought another country, ver. 14, heaven, their own country. Their designs are for it; their desires are after it; their discourse is about it. They were not mindful of the country from whence they came, ver. 15. They had no desire to return to it. Those who are once effectually and savingly called out of a sinful state, have no mind to return into it again. They did not return, though they had time enough to return, and had strength to return. We shall not want opportunities to revolt from God; but we must show the truth of our faith and profession. Their sincerity appeared in desiring a better country, that is, a heavenly. Be sure that the heavenly country is better

than any upon earth. All true believers desire this better country. True faith draws forth sincere and fervent desires; and the stronger faith is, the more fervent those desires will be.

Observe the gracious and great reward of their faith. God is the God of all true believers. Notwithstanding their meanness by nature, their vileness by sin, and the poverty of their outward condition, God is not ashamed to be called their God; such is his condescension, such is his love to them. Let them never be ashamed of being called his people, nor of any of those who are truly so, how much soever despised in the world. Above all, let them take care that they are not a shame and reproach to their God, and so provoke him to be ashamed of them. The advantages the patriarchs had on earth, from their believing dependence on God, were too transient and too small to answer such a relation. As he takes to himself the title of their God, he will fully answer it, and he has prepared for them in heaven what will fully answer this character and relation. This should warm the affections, enlarge the desires, and excite the diligent endeavours of the people of God.

The apostle gives an instance of the greatest trial and act of faith that stands upon record, and that was, Abraham's offering up Isaac, ver. 17. In this observe, the trial and exercise of Abraham's faith. Read the account, Gen. 22. 2. There you will find that every word shows a trial. Some things added much to the greatness of this trial. It was after he had received the promises that Isaac should be one of the progenitors of the Messiah, and all nations be blessed in him; so that in being called to offer up his Isaac, he seemed to be called to destroy his own family, to cancel the promises of God, to prevent the coming of Christ, to sacrifice his hopes of salvation, and to cut off the church of God at one blow; a terrible trial indeed! Abraham obeyed; he offered up Isaac, according to the command of God; and would have gone through with it if God had not bade him to stay. His faith was supported by the sense he had of the mighty power of God, who was able to raise the dead, ver. 19; thereby he resolved all his doubts. It does not appear that Abraham had any expectation of being prevented from offering up his

son; but he knew that God was able to raise him from the dead; and he believed that God would do so, since such great things depended upon his son, which must have failed if Isaac had not a further life. It is our duty to reason down our doubts and fears, by considering the almighty power of God.

The reward of his faith in this great trial was, that he received his son. He had parted with him to God, and God gave him back again. The best way to enjoy our comforts is to resign them up to God; he will then return them as shall be the best for us. He received him from the dead, for he gave him up for dead; he was as a dead child to him. This was a figure of the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ, of whom Isaac was a type. It was a figure and earnest of the glorious resurrection of all true believers, whose life is not lost, but hid with Christ in God.

Let us inquire how far our faith has produced similar obedience, when we have been called to lesser acts of self-denial, or to make inferior sacrifices to our duty. Have we given up what was called for, in unreserved confidence that the Lord would make up all our losses, and even bless us by means of the most afflictive dispensations. For as he spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not, with him, freely give us all things? And what shall we deem too valuable to give up, at the call of such a merciful and bounteous Benefactor?

14 Enoch did not die, but the stress here is not laid upon the death of those believers, but upon their having retained their faith through life.—*Bloomfield from Mages*

16. This carries the highest evidence that the patriarchs had a revelation and promise of a future state of glory in heaven.—*Gayse*.

Ver. 20—23. The faith of Isaac. He blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come. He prayed for them, and prophesied concerning them; see Gen. 27. Both Jacob and Esau were blessed as Isaac's children, as to temporal good things. Things present are not the best things; no man knoweth love or hatred by having or wanting them. Isaac as well as Rebekah was to blame, yet he also spake by the Spirit of prophecy, entirely believing and submitting to the discoveries made to him relative to the future condition of the posterity

both of Jacob and Esau, though his own purposes were defeated thereby.

The faith of Jacob, ver. 21. His life was a life of faith, and his faith met with great exercise. But it has pleased God to record two instances of the faith of this patriarch, at the time he blessed the two sons of Joseph, Ephraim and Manasseh. He prayed for them that they might both be blessed of God. He prophesied they should be blessed. He worshipped, he praised God, expressing confidence in him and gratitude to him, and prayed for those he was leaving behind. He did this, leaning on the top of his staff; which intimates his bodily weakness, that he was not able to support himself on his bed without a staff; yet he would not make this an excuse for neglecting the worshipping of God. Jacob thus acted his faith, when he was dying; he lived by faith, and he died by faith and in faith. Though the grace of faith is of universal use through our whole lives, it is especially so when we come to die. Faith has a very great work to do at last, to help the believer to die to the Lord, so as to honour him, by patience, hope, and joy.

The faith of Joseph, ver. 22. He was tried by temptations to sin, by persecution, for retaining his integrity; he was tried by preferment and power in the court of Pharaoh, and yet his faith carried him through to the last. He made mention by faith that the time would come, when the children of Israel should be delivered out of Egypt; both to caution against the thoughts of settling in Egypt, now a place of plenty and ease to them; and to keep them from sinking under the calamities and distresses he foresaw coming upon them. He gave commandment that they should preserve his bones unburied in Egypt, till God should deliver them out of that house of bondage, and that then they should deposit them in Canaan. Joseph did not think his being buried in Egypt would prejudice his soul, or prevent the resurrection of his body. But to testify, that though he lived and died in Egypt, yet he did not live and die an Egyptian, but an Israelite—that he desired after his death to have his lot with God's people. And to assure them that God would be with them in Egypt, and deliver them out of it in his own time and way. The faith of Joseph acted after this manner,

as in the case of Jacob, when dying. God often gives his people living comforts in dying moments; and it is their duty, as they can, to communicate them to those about them.

The account of the faith of the parents of Moses is cited from Exodus 2. 2. They hid their son three months. It is a great mercy to be free from wicked laws and edicts; but when we are not, we must use all lawful means for our security. In this faith of Moses' parents there was a mixture of unbelief, but God was pleased to overlook it. No doubt, natural affection moved them; but there was something further. There appeared in him something uncommon. They were not afraid of the king's commandment, Exod. 1. 22. They believed God would preserve his people, and that the time was coming for their deliverance. Some must hazard their own lives to preserve their children, and they were resolved to do this. Faith is a great preservative against the sinful slavish fear of men; it sets God before the soul, shows the vanity of the creature, and its subordination to the will and power of God.

21. See Gen 47. 31. The hebrew word will bear the sense either of 'staff,' or of 'bed's head,' according to the pointing, which cannot decide the question, as it was not introduced till the fifth century. The quotation here is from the septuagint, and gives the former rendering, but the difference is not material. The head of the bed would not be one similar to those now in use among us, as an eastern bed has no head; but it would be a long pillow or cushion such as now is used in the east. Upon this Jacob might be reclining his arm. Or he may have sat upon his couch leaning on his staff. It is unnecessary to make any observation upon that perversion which would represent a dying patriarch as worshipping a stick!

Ver. 24—31. The faith of Moses himself, ver. 24—26. How great the temptation! he stood fair to be in time king of Egypt, and he might thereby have been serviceable to Israel. He owed his life to the princess; and to refuse such kindness from her, would look not only like ingratitude, but neglect of Providence, that seemed to intend his advancement for his brethren's advantage. How glorious was the triumph of his faith in so great a trial! He refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, lest he should undervalue the truer honour of being a son of Abraham, the father of the faithful; lest it should be renouncing his religion as well as his relation to Israel. He was willing to take his lot

with the people of God here, though a suffering lot, that he might have his portion with them hereafter; rather than to enjoy all the sensual pleasures of Pharaoh's court, which would last but for a season, and then be punished with everlasting misery. The pleasures of sin are, and will be but short; they must end either in speedy repentance or in speedy ruin. The pleasures of this world, especially those of a court, are for the most part the pleasures of sin; they are always so when we cannot enjoy them without deserting God and his people. Suffering is to be chosen rather than sin; there being more evil in the least sin than can be in the greatest suffering.

In his judgment, directed by faith, the worst of religion weighed down the best of the world. Moses conquered the riches of the world, as he conquered its honours and pleasures. God's people are, and always have been a reproached people. Christ accounts himself reproached in their reproaches; and while he thus interests himself in their reproaches, they become greater riches than the treasures of the richest empire in the world; for Christ will reward them with a crown of glory that fades not away. Faith discerning this, determines and acts accordingly. Moses made this choice when ripe for judgment and enjoyment, able to know what he did, and why he did it. It was from mature deliberation. It is excellent for persons to be seriously religious; to despise the world, when most capable of relishing and enjoying it. He had respect to the recompense of reward; the glorious reward of faith in the other world. Heaven is a reward suitable to the price paid for it—the blood of Christ; suitable to the perfections of God, and fully answering to all his promises. It is a recompense of reward, given by a righteous Judge, for the righteousness of Christ, to righteous persons, according to the righteous rule of the covenant of grace. Believers may and ought to have respect to this recompense of reward; they should acquaint themselves with it, and live in the daily and delightful expectation of it. Thus it will direct their course; draw their hearts; conquer their enemies; quicken them to duty; and refresh them under all the difficulties of doing and suffering work. All believers

are not called to make the same sacrifices, or to endure the same trials for righteousness' sake; nor have all the same measure of faith; yet without experience of this kind, we are not warranted to conclude we have the same faith as the self-denying faith of Moses.

By faith, he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king, when the king was incensed against him for killing the Egyptian. Or, rather this relates to his leaving that kingdom the second time, when he led forth the tribes of Israel, a commander and ruler, after God had employed him to humble Pharaoh. Those who forsake Egypt, must expect the wrath of men; but they need not fear it, for they are under the guidance of that God who is able to make the wrath of man to praise him, and to restrain the remainder of it. He bore up with invincible courage under all danger, and endured all the fatigue of his employment, which was very great; and this by considering the invisible God. By faith, we may see this invisible God; we may be fully assured of his existence, of his providence, and of his gracious and powerful presence with us. Such a sight of God will enable believers to endure to the end whatever they may meet in the way.

Here is yet another instance of the faith of Moses, in keeping the passover and sprinkling of blood, ver. 28. The passover was one of the most solemn institutions of the Old Testament, and a very significant type of Christ. By faith, Moses foresaw the destruction of the first-born, and expected the exemption of Israel from that calamity, in the way the Lord had prescribed to him. He therefore influenced the people to keep the passover, slaying the lamb, and sprinkling the blood upon the doorposts. The application of this type is not difficult. Christ is our passover, he was sacrificed for us. His blood must be sprinkled; it must be applied to those who have the saving benefit of it. It is applied effectually only to the Israelites, the chosen people of God. It is not owing to our own righteousness or best performances, that we are saved from the wrath of God; but to the blood of Christ, and his imputed righteousness. If any families of Israel had neglected the sprinkling of the blood upon their doors, though they spent all

the night in prayer, the destroying angel would have slain their first-born. Wherever this blood is applied, the soul receives Christ in all his offices by faith, and lives upon him. This true faith makes sin bitter to the soul, even while it receives the pardon and atonement. All our spiritual privileges on earth should quicken us in our way to heaven. Those who have been marked out, must ever remember and acknowledge free and distinguishing grace.

By Moses' faith as their leader, the Israelites passed through the Red Sea as by dry land. The grace of faith will help us through all the dangers in our way to heaven. Another instance of faith is that under Joshua their leader, before the walls of Jericho. Here was a great trial of their faith; the method prescribed of marching round the walls and blowing their trumpets, seemed very improbable to answer such an end, and would doubtless expose them to the daily contempt of their enemies; the ark of God would seem to be in danger. But this was the way God commanded, and the walls of Jericho fell before them. God can, and will, in his own time and way, cause all the powerful opposition to his interest and glory to fall down, and the grace of faith is mighty through God, for the pulling down of strong holds. He will make Babylon fall before the faith of his people, and when he has some great thing to do for them, he raises up great and strong faith in them.

Rahab was a Canaanite, a stranger to the commonwealth of Israel, and had but little help for faith, and yet she was a believer, ver. 31: the power of Divine grace greatly appears, when it works without the usual means of grace. She believed that the greatness of sin, if truly repented of, shall be no bar to the pardoning mercy of God. By her faith, she received the spies in peace, the men that Joshua had sent to spy out Jericho. She not only bade them welcome, but she concealed them from their enemies who sought to cut them off. True faith will show itself in good works, especially toward the people of God. Faith will venture all hazards in the cause of God and his people; true believers will sooner expose their own persons than God's interest and people. A true believer is desirous, not only to be in

covenant with God, but in communion with the people of God, is willing to fare as they fare. Rahab, by her faith, escaped perishing with those that believed not. The cause of Jericho's destruction was unbelief; they believed not that Israel's God was the true God, and that Israel was the peculiar people of God, though they had evidence of it. Her family were marked out for mercy, and perished not. Singular faith will be rewarded with singular favours in times of calamity.

By her works she declared herself to be just. For, that she was not justified by her works appears plainly; because the work she did was faulty in the manner, and not perfectly good, therefore could not be answerable to the perfect justice or righteousness of God.—(56)

26. "Esteeming the scolds cast on the Israelites for expecting the Christ to arise among them, in whom all the nations of the earth should be blessed, greater riches than the treasures of Egypt: for he looked off from them to the reward which he expected in the life to come."—*Macknight*.

31. The falsehood Rahab told for preserving the spies, was the effect, not of her faith, but of her sinful dread of the king's wrath. It was unjustifiable, but it was not to the purpose of this discourse to notice it, any more than the sinful infirmities mixed with the faith of others who are enumerated.—*Guyse*. But he considers that her faith here spoken of, and proved to be sincere by her care of the spies, related not to her spiritual and eternal salvation, only to the temporal preservation of her family, though she afterwards was incorporated with the church of Israel, and even then really believed that Jehovah was the only true God.

Ver. 32—38. What shall I say more? After all our researches into the scripture, there is still more to be learned from them. We should be pleased to think how great the number of believers was under the Old Testament, and how strong their faith, though the objects of it were not then so fully revealed as now. And we should lament that now, in gospel times, when the rule of faith is more clear and perfect, the number of believers should be so small, and their faith so weak. Gideon is mentioned. He was an instrument raised up of God to deliver his people from the oppression of the midianites; a person of mean tribe and family, called from a mean employment, and saluted by an angel of God in a surprising manner. When his army was reduced to three hundred, God, by them, put the whole army of the midianites to confusion and ruin;

and the same faith that gave Gideon so much courage and honour, enabled him to act with meekness towards his brethren afterward. It is the excellency of the grace of faith, that, while it helps men to do great things, it keeps from high and great thoughts of themselves.

Barak was another instrument raised up to deliver Israel out of the hand of Jabin, king of Canaan. By his faith he obtained a great victory over all the host of Sisera. His faith taught him to give all the praise and glory to God; faith has recourse unto God in all dangers and difficulties, and then makes grateful returns to God for all mercies and deliverances.

Samson was another instrument that God raised up to deliver Israel from the philistines. If Samson had not had a strong faith as well as a strong arm, he never had performed such exploits. By faith, the servants of God shall overcome even the roaring lion, that goeth about seeking whom he may devour. True faith is acknowledged and accepted, even when mingled with many failings. The believer's faith endures to the end, and, in dying, gives him victory over death and all his deadly enemies.

Jephthah was raised up to deliver Israel from the ammonites. The grace of God often fixes upon very undeserving and ill-deserving persons, to do great things for them and by them. But the grace of faith, wherever it is, will put men upon acknowledging God in all their ways. The grace of faith will make men bold and venturous in a good cause. Faith not only puts men upon making their vows to God, but paying their vows after the mercy received; yea, though they have vowed to their great grief, hurt, and loss, as in the case of Jephthah and his daughter.

David, that great man after God's own heart. Few ever met with greater trials, and few ever discovered a more lively faith. After a long life of virtue and honour, though not without some foul stains of sin, he died in faith, relying upon the everlasting covenant that God had made with him and his, ordered in all things and sure; and he has left behind him such deep experiences of the trials and acts of faith, in the book of psalms, as have been and ever will be of great value and use to the people of God.

Samuel was raised up to be an eminent prophet of the Lord to Israel, as well as a ruler over them. God revealed himself to Samuel, when he was but a child, and continued to do so till his death. Those are likely to grow up to eminency in faith, who begin betimes in the exercise of it. Those whose business it is to reveal the mind and will of God to others, need to be well established in the belief of it themselves. To Samuel is added "and of the prophets," who were the extraordinary ministers of the Old Testament church, employed of God, sometimes to denounce judgment, sometimes to promise mercy, always to reprove sin; sometimes to foretell remarkable events; but chiefly to give notice of the Messiah, his coming, person, and offices; for in him the prophets as well as the law centre. A true and strong faith was very requisite for the right discharge of such an office as this. Faith will enable a man to serve God and his generation, in whatever way he may be employed, whether governing nations, reforming them, or defending them against unjust assailants; or in preaching the gospel and boldly testifying against its opposers; or by working righteousness and obtaining promises in a more obscure station. It will influence men to ready obedience, and that diligence most likely to ensure success in their undertakings.

And now, having done naming particular persons, the apostle proceeds to mention some things that easily apply themselves to one or other of the persons named, but he also mentions other things that are not so easy to be accommodated to any here named; these must be left to general conjecture or accommodation. By faith they subdued kingdoms. The interests and powers of kings and kingdoms are often in opposition to God and his people; but God can easily subdue all those kings and kingdoms that set themselves to oppose him. Faith makes men just, bold, and wise. They wrought righteousness, both in their public and personal capacities; they turned many from idolatry to the ways of righteousness; they believed God, and it was imputed to them for righteousness; they walked and acted righteously toward God and man. It is a greater honour and happiness to work righte-

ousness than to work miracles; faith is an active principle of universal righteousness. They obtained promises, both general and special. It is faith that gives us an interest in the promises; it is by faith that we have the comfort of the promises; and it is by faith that we are prepared to wait for the promises, and in due time to receive them. They stopped the mouths of lions. The power of God is above the power of the creature, and faith engages the power of God for his people, whenever it shall be for his glory to overcome brute beasts and brutish men.

They quenched the violence of the fire, ver. 34. As Shadrach, Meshech, and Abednego. They escaped the edge of the sword. God can blunt the edge of the sword, or turn it away from his people against their enemies when he pleases. Faith takes hold of that hand of God, which has hold of the swords of men; and God has often suffered himself to be prevailed upon by the faith of his people. Out of weakness they were made strong; from national weakness, into which the Jews often fell by their unbelief; when their faith revived, all their interest and affairs revived and flourished. And from bodily weakness, mortal distempers. Also, it is the same grace of faith, that from spiritual weakness helps men to recover and renew their spiritual strength. They grew valiant in fight; so did Joshua, the judges, and David. True faith gives truest courage and patience, as it discerns the strength of God, and thereby the weakness of all his enemies. They were not only valiant, but successful; God, as a reward and encouragement of their faith, put to flight the armies of those who were aliens to their commonwealth, and enemies to their religion. Women received their dead raised to life again. In Christ there is neither male nor female; many of the weaker sex have been strong in faith. God has sometimes yielded to the tender affections of sorrowful women, so as to restore their dead children to life again. See 2 Kings 4. 36; Luke 7. 12. Though we do not hope to have our dead relatives or friends restored to life in this world, yet faith will support under bereavements, and direct to the hope of a better resurrection.

We are here informed what these

believers endured by faith. They were tortured, not accepting deliverance. They bore the torture, and would not accept of deliverance upon the terms of becoming apostates; that which animated them thus to suffer, was, their hope of obtaining a better resurrection, and deliverance upon more honourable terms. They were persecuted in their reputation by mockings, cruel to a well-disposed mind; in their persons by scourging, the punishment of slaves; in their liberty by bonds and imprisonment. How inveterate is the malice of wicked men toward the righteous! what variety of cruelties it will invent and exercise upon those, against whom they have no cause of quarrel, except in the matters of their God! Trials of cruel mockings may be expected in the most favoured days, even when free from severe afflictions. They were put to death in the most cruel manner; some were stoned or sawn asunder. They were tempted; some read it, burnt. They were slain with the sword. All sorts of death were prepared for them; their enemies clothed death in all the array of cruelty and terror, and yet they boldly endured it. Those who escaped death, were used so that death might seem more desirable than such a life. Their enemies spared them only to prolong their misery. They were stripped of the conveniences of life, turned from their homes; had no raiment to put on; they were driven from human society, and forced to hide in dens and caves. Such sufferings they endured for their faith; and endured them through the power of the grace of faith. Which shall we be most amazed at? the wickedness of human nature, that is capable of acting such cruelties on fellow-creatures, or the excellency of Divine grace, that is able to bear up the faithful under such cruelties, and to carry them safely through all!

What a difference between God's judgment of a saint, and man's judgment! The world is not worthy of those scorned, persecuted saints, whom their persecutors call rogues, unworthy to live. They are not worthy of their company, example, counsel, or other benefits. For they know not what a saint is, nor the worth of a saint, nor how to use him; yea, they hate him, and drive such away, as they do the offer of Christ and his grace.—(3.)

32. Jephthah being here commended for his faith, certain it is he had knowledge of God's will and word, therefore we must think he knew God would not accept such a vow, by the performance of which he should commit wilful and unnatural murder. The original may be translated, It shall be the Lord's, or I will offer it. *Perkins.* See note, Judges 11.

33. The accomplishment of the particular promises given to several persons, is not inconsistent with their not having received the promise, ver. 39, which relates to the Messiah.

35 "Tortured" The original denotes a punishment in use among the Greeks. The criminal was stretched out, and beaten to death with clubs.

37. "Sawn a-under." The Jewish tradition is, that Isaiah was thus put to death by Manassah. All the instances of suffering and death mentioned here are not recorded distinctly in the Old Testament, but no doubt all occurred under the persecution of Antiochus, and perhaps of Manassah and others.

Ver. 39, 40 These believers obtained by their faith, commendation from God, that the world was not worthy of such men. The world did not know how to value them, nor how to use them, but abhorred and execrated them. The righteous are not worthy to live in the world, and God declares the world is not worthy of them: and though they widely differ in their judgment, they agree in this, that it is not fit good men should have their rest in this world. Therefore God receives them out of it, to that world which is suitable to them, and yet far beyond the merit of all their services and sufferings. They obtained an interest in the promises, though not the full possession. They had a title to the promises, though they received not the great things promised. Faith was the principle by which they were distinguished from other men, both in respect of God's acceptance and their patient obedience and deliverances. Yet they received not the promise their faith especially embraced, they lived not to see the accomplishment of the promise concerning the Messiah, though saved by the efficacy of his sacrifice.

God had determined that without the benefit of the dispensation now made known to us, they should not be perfected by the expiation of their sins, and the enjoyment of eternal life.—(36.)

They had types, but not the Antitype; they had shadows, but had not seen the substance; and yet, under this imperfect dispensation, they manifested this precious faith. The apostle tells the

Hebrews, God had provided some better things for them, therefore they might be assured that he expected as good things from them. Since the gospel is the end and perfection of the Old Testament, the chief excellence of which is its reference to Christ and the gospel, their faith should be more perfect than the faith of the Old Testament saints. Their faith and dispensation were more perfect than the former, and were indeed its perfection and completion; for without the gospel church the Jewish church must have remained in an incomplete and imperfect state. This reasoning is strong, and should effectually prevail with us all. As our advantages, with the better things God has provided for us, are so much superior to theirs; so should our obedience of faith, patience of hope, and labour of love, be more distinguished.

And unless we get true faith as these believers had, they will rise up to condemn us at the last day. For they believed, though they had not the ground of faith laid before them that we have. Wherefore let them that want knowledge labour for it, and they which have it, let them join obedience with their knowledge, that the faith of their hearts may be seen by the fruits of their lives; for true faith cannot be hid, but will break out in good works.—(56.)

It is here implied that in heaven the Old Testament believers came to the enjoyment of what they believed and hoped for on earth, and which they were expecting; namely, the accomplishment of the Old Testament promises of Christ, and the good things to be brought in by him. When Christ actually came, made satisfaction for sin, rose from the dead, and ascended into heaven, that he might fill the things in heaven as well as on earth, Eph. 4. 10, their knowledge and enjoyment were greatly enlarged. Christ, the Son of David, now sat down on His throne there, entered as High Priest within the veil, as a minister of the true sanctuary, with the blood of his sacrifice, appeared before God with acceptance, appeared as the slain Lamb in the midst of the throne, and as the object of the worship and adoration of the redeemed company. Herein the Old Testament saints saw all their desire, and all their salvation accomplished. They

received of his Spirit, and were brought into society with New Testament believers of all nations, Eph. 1. 10, Heb. 12. 23, and with the angels.—(91.)

Let us then pray continually for the increase of our faith, that we may follow these illustrious examples, and be, with them, at length made perfect in holiness and happiness, and shine like the sun in the kingdom of our Father for evermore. •

CHAPTER XII.

From the preceding account of the faith of Old Testament believers under all their difficulties, the Hebrews are exhorted to constancy and perseverance in faith and patience, under all their trials and afflictions; and, still further to encourage them thereunto, the pre-eminent example of Christ is set before them, ver. 1—3, and the gracious design of God, in all the sufferings they endured, 4—13. Peace and holiness are recommended with cautions against despising spiritual blessings like Esau, 14—17. The much greater excellency of the New than of the Old Testament dispensation is shown, 18—29.

Ver. 1—3. The Hebrews were to consider themselves as surrounded by witnesses to the faithfulness of God, and the power of truth, as innumerable as the drops of water in a cloud. Multitudes seemed to surround them, and behold their conduct in the difficult and dangerous race in which they had themselves obtained so blessed a victory by their faith. Every thing that would hinder them, should be laid aside, as men then laid aside their garments while running in the public games. They must not burden themselves with worldly cares, interests, or indulgences, which would delay, or prove hindrances in their course. They must especially watch against their sinful propensities, and seek to subdue them, and their unbelief, through which they were tempted to apostasy. Persevering obedience of faith in Christ was the race set before them, wherein they must either win the crown of glory, or have everlasting misery for their portion.

By the sin that doth so easily beset us is understood that sin to which we are most prone, or to which we are most liable from constitution, habit, age, and circumstances. This is a most important exhortation; for while a man's

darling sin, be it what it will, remains unsubdued, it will effectually hinder him from running the christian race. Therefore the Hebrews are exhorted to lay aside every weight, and particularly the sin of unbelief, which had appeared in the weak and wavering state of some, and in the actual apostasy of others. This rendered them unfit for running the christian race, as it deprived them of every motive for running, and gave to every discouragement, power and influence over them.—(91.)

For their more full instruction and encouragement, they must look steadily to Jesus, as the Author and Finisher of faith itself. Though He needed not that faith by which a sinner is justified, yet in finishing his work on earth, he led his people the way to complete victory over every enemy, by patient, obedient reliance on his heavenly Father. And, as he had in all things the pre-eminence, so also in sufferings, which he endured for the joy set before him of the salvation of so many sinners from eternal destruction. And he disregarded the shame and anguish he was called to endure, in life and in death upon earth, until his undertaking was finished, and he was raised from the dead, and exalted to the right hand of the throne of God. This supported the human soul of Christ under all his unparalleled sufferings.

This case was so extraordinary that they were to consider it with the utmost exactness; estimating the dignity of the sufferer and the contradiction of sinners, the intensity and variety of his sufferings, the fortitude with which he endured, and the blessed consequences of his humiliation. When weary and faint in their minds such considerations would encourage them while they recollected that the holy Jesus suffered, to save them from eternal misery, and that his cross secured a happy issue to all their trials and conflicts for his sake. By steadfastly looking to Jesus, animating topics would occur to their minds, strengthening their holy affections, and repressing carnal propensities.

Let us then frequently consider him. What are our little trials to his agonies, or even to our deserts? What are they to the sufferings of many others? There is a proneness in believers to grow weary, and to faint under their

trials and afflictions, especially when they prove heavy and of long continuance; this proceeds from the imperfection of grace and the remains of corruption. The best way to prevent this, is, to look unto Jesus, and to consider him. Faith and meditation will bring in fresh supplies of strength, comfort, and courage; for Christ has assured them, if they suffer with him, they shall also reign with him.

1. Here again the apostle alludes to the public games, when the combatants contended for the prize, in the presence of a vast number of spectators, including many great and illustrious characters.

2. Crucifixion was not only the most painful and excruciating, but the most reproachful and ignominious death.—*Harwood.*

Ver. 4—13. The exhortation to patience and perseverance, is pressed from the lightness of the sufferings the believing Hebrews had endured in their christian course. The cause of the conflict was sin, and every christian is to strive against sin, against sinful doctrines, sinful practices, sinful habits and customs, both in himself and in others. They might have suffered more; for they had not as yet been called to martyrdom. Christians should not magnify their afflictions, but should notice the mercy mixed with them, and pity those called to seal their testimony with their own blood. Christians should not faint under lesser trials, when they see others bear up under greater, and know not how soon they may meet with greater themselves. Though their enemies and persecutors may be instruments of inflicting such sufferings, yet they are Divine chastisements; their heavenly Father has his hand in all, and his wise end to answer by all.

Christians must remember that in their troubles they are tried, whether they will choose to sin or to suffer.—(18.)

God has directed his people how to behave under afflictions; they must avoid extremes. They must not despise the chastening of the Lord; they must not make light of afflictions, and be insensible under them; for they are the hand and rod of God, and his rebukes for sin. They must not despond and sink under their trials, nor fret and repine, but bear up with faith and patience. If they run into either extreme, it is a sign they have forgotten

their heavenly Father's advice and exhortation.

Afflictions, rightly endured, though fruits of God's displeasure, are proofs of his paternal love and care, ver. 6, 7. The best of God's children need chastisement. God may let others alone in their sins, he will correct sin in his own children. In this he acts as becomes a father. To be suffered to go on in sin without rebuke, is a sad sign of alienation from God. Such may call him Father, but they are the spurious offspring of another father, not of God, ver. 8.

Those who are impatient under the discipline of their heavenly Father, behave worse than children to earthly parents, ver. 9, 10. It is the duty of children to reverence the just commands of their parents, and submit to their correction when they have been disobedient. Parents have not only authority, but a charge, from God for this. And our earthly fathers are but the fathers of our flesh, for God is the Father of our spirits. Our souls are not of a material substance, they are the immediate offspring of God, who, after he had formed the body of man out of the earth, breathed into him a vital spirit, and so he became a living soul. Our earthly parents sometimes may chasten us to gratify their passion rather than to reform our manners. But the Father of our spirits never willingly grieves, nor afflicts his children. It is always for our profit; and to correct and cure the sinful disorders which make us unlike to God; to improve and increase the graces, which are the image of God in us, that we may be and act more like our heavenly Father. God loves his children, and for this end he chastises them when they need it. The fathers of our flesh corrected us for a few days, in our state of childhood. Our whole life here is a state of childhood, minority, and imperfection as to spiritual things; therefore we must submit to the discipline of such a state. When we come to a state of perfection, we shall be fully reconciled to all the measures of God's discipline over us now. God's correction is not condemnation; though his children may at first fear lest affliction should come upon that dreadful errand. Afflictions are not grateful to the sense, but grievous; the flesh will feel them, and be grieved by them, and groan

under them; but the judgment of faith corrects that of sense, and declares that sanctified affliction produces the fruits of righteousness. These fruits are peaceable, and tend to quiet and comfort the soul. If the pain of the body contribute to the peace of the mind, and short present affliction produces blessed fruits of a long continuance, there is no reason to fret or faint under it; but the chastening may be endured with patience, and improved so as greatly to promote our holiness. Let us then learn to consider the afflictions brought upon us by the malice of men, as corrections sent by our wise and gracious Father. Let us consider them as needful favours, pledges of love, and sent for our spiritual good. A burden of affliction is apt to make the christian's hands hang down, and his knees grow feeble, to dispirit him and discourage him; but this he must strive against, that he may the better run his own spiritual race and course. Faith, and patience, and holy courage and resolution, will make him walk more steadily, keep a straighter path, and prevent wavering and wandering. It is our duty to take courage, and act by faith, and so help one another forward in the way to heaven.

9 Here is a reference to the work of regeneration effected by the Divine Spirit, whereby faithful christians are said to be begotten again of God.—*Blountfield.*

12, 13. A good pastor should support and animate those under the trial of afflictions, which as they fortify the strong so they weaken the feeble. 1 By rendering them more slothful in good works, (humble.) 2. Less fervent and assiduous in prayer, (knees.) 3. More easy to wander out of the way of the gospel. 4. Less firm in the faith 5 More open to temptation and to sin.—*Queenel.*

Ver. 14—17. Faith and patience enable believers to follow peace and holiness also, as a man follows his calling, constantly, diligently, and with pleasure. As far as we can go, without sacrificing truth and duty, we shall find that peace with men, of all sects and parties, will be favourable to our pursuit of holiness. Sufferings are apt to sour the spirit, and to sharpen the passions of worldly persons, but the children of God must follow peace with all men. Peace and holiness are connected together; there can be no right peace without holiness. But we must not, under pretence of living peaceably with all men, leave the

ways of holiness, but cultivate peace in a way of holiness. Without holiness no man shall see the Lord; none can behold his manifested glory, and commune with him in comfort, while in this world, without the sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience, nor can any be admitted to see him in heaven without being made holy, even as God is holy.

Where afflictions and sufferings for the sake of Christ are not considered as the chastisement of our heavenly Father, and improved as such, they will be dangerous snares and temptations to apostasy, against which every christian should carefully watch. Where persons fail of having the true grace of God, corruption will prevail and break forth; a root of bitterness, a bitter root producing bitter fruits to themselves and others; to themselves corrupt principles, which lead to apostasy. Let them beware lest any unmortified lust in the heart, which seemed to be dead, should spring up to the trouble and disturbance of the whole body. By corrupt principles and practices many are troubled, the peace of the churches broken, the peace of men's minds disturbed, and many tainted with bad principles, and drawn into defiling practices. The apostle gives an awful example, lest any should sin under a mistaken notion of christian liberty—that of Esau; who, though the eldest son, and so entitled to the privilege of being prophet, priest, and king, in his family, was so profane as to despise these sacred privileges, and to sell his birthright for a morsel of meat. Thus apostates, to avoid persecution, and enjoy sensual ease and pleasure, give up all pretensions to the Divine blessing and inheritance. Esau's punishment was suitable to his sin. He was condemned by his own conscience; he saw that the blessing he had made light of, was worth having, worth the seeking, though with much care and many tears, but he neither truly repented of his sins, nor desired to do so, though he coveted the temporal advantages, at least, the dominion over his brother.

He found no place of repentance in his father, or of true repentance in his own soul; the blessing was given to another, even to him to whom he sold it for a mess of pottage. Esau, in his wickedness, had made the bargain, and

God, in his righteous judgment confirmed it, and would not suffer Isaac to reverse it. Apostasy from Christ is the fruit of preferring the gratification of the flesh to the blessing of God and the heavenly inheritance. Sinners will not always have such mean thoughts of the Divine blessing and inheritance as now they have. The time is coming when they will think no pains too great, no cares, no tears too much to obtain the lost blessing. When the day of grace is over, they cannot repent aught of their sin; and God will not repent of the sentence he passed upon them for their sin. Therefore christians should never give up their title, and hope of their Father's blessing and inheritance, and expose themselves to his irrevocable wrath and curse, by deserting their holy religion, to avoid suffering; which, though it may be persecution as far as wicked men are concerned, is only a rod of correction and chastisement in the hand of their heavenly Father, to bring them near to himself in conformity and communion. This is another awful warning against apostasy, but it in no degree relates to those who repent of their sins, and seek forgiveness of God.

It agrees with the profane man's disposition, to desire the blessing, and yet despise the means whereby the blessing is gotten. But God will neither sever the means from the blessing, nor join the blessing with the satisfaction of man's lusts. And, observe, we read here that a blessing was sought carefully from a man, with tears, and not obtained; but we read not, that God's mercy and blessing was ever sought from himself, carefully, and not obtained.—(18.)

Ver. 18.—29. The professing Hebrews are urged to persevere in their christian course and conflict, by showing how much the gospel church differs from the jewish church, and how much it excels. Mount Sinai, on which the jewish church state was constituted, was a mount that might be touched, ver. 18, though forbidden to be so, a palpable place; so was the dispensation. It consisted much in external and earthly things. The state of the gospel church on mount Zion is more spiritual and easy of access. The jewish was a dark dispensation. Upon mount

Sinai there were blackness and darkness, and that church state was covered with dark shadows and types; the gospel state is much more clear and bright. The jews could not bear the terror. It struck them with such dread, that they entreated that the word should not be so spoken to them any more, ver. 19. Yea, Moses himself said, I exceedingly fear and quake. The best of men on earth are not able to converse immediately with God and his holy angels. The gospel state is kind and condescending, suited to our weak frame. It was a limited dispensation; all might not approach that mount, but only Moses and Aaron. Under the gospel all have access with boldness to God's presence. It involved many dangers, ver. 20. It will always be dangerous for presumptuous sinners to draw nigh to God; but it is not immediate and certain death as then. This was the state of the jewish church, fitted to awe a stubborn and hard-hearted people, to set forth the strict and tremendous justice of God. And the most holy must despair, if judged by the holy law given from Sinai, without a Saviour. The gospel church is called mount Zion, the heavenly Jerusalem, which is free; in opposition to mount Sinai, which tendeth to bondage, Gal. 4. 24. In coming to mount Zion, believers come into heavenly places, and into a heavenly society. God has taken up his gracious residence in the gospel church, which on that account is an emblem of heaven. There his people may find him ruling, guiding, sanctifying, and comforting them; there he speaks to them by the gospel ministry; there they speak to him by prayer. Also, there he gives the earnest of their inheritance to the heavenly Jerusalem. There believers have clearer views of heaven, plainer evidences for heaven, greater meetness and more heavenly tempers of soul.

They come to an innumerable company of angels, who are of the same family with the saints, under the same Head, and in a great measure employed in the same work, ministering to believers for their good. And they come to the general assembly and church of the first-born that are written in heaven, to the universal church, however dispersed. By faith, we come to them; have communion with them in the same

Head, by the same Spirit, and in the same blessed hope; and walk in the same way of holiness; grappling with the same spiritual enemies, and hasting to the same rest, victory, and glorious triumph. There will be the general assembly of the first-born, the saints of former and earlier times, who saw the promises of the gospel state, but received them not, as well as those who first received them under the gospel, and were regenerated thereby, and so were the first-born, and the first-fruits of the gospel church. And all the children of God are heirs, and every one has the privileges of the first-born. The names of these are written in heaven, they are enrolled in the Lamb's book of life. They come to God the Judge of all; that great God who will judge both jew and gentile according to the law they are under. Believers come to him now by faith, and know they shall be justified hereafter. To the spirits of just men made perfect; to the righteous, to the best part of just men, their spirits, and to these in their best state made perfect.

They are made perfect. Let a soul be supposed to join that glorious assembly and church above, that is yet unacquainted with God, strange and disaffected to him, alienated from the divine life, still carnally minded, loving this present world and state of things, looking back to it with a lingering eye, full of pride and self-magnifying thoughts, and guile, filled with lusts and inordinate desires, such a soul would seem to have mistaken its way, place, state, and company. Its condition would be equally uneasy to itself and all about it; the outrage of its own lusts and passions would create to it a hell in the midst of heaven. But a summary of the inward perfection of the spirits of just men, in their most perfect state cannot be given in fuller and more comprehensive terms than in the few words, 1 John 3. 2; We shall be like Christ, for we shall see him, as he is.—(40.)

The gospel covenant is a new covenant, distinct from the covenant of works, ver. 24, and it is now under a new dispensation distinct from that of the Old Testament. Christ is the Mediator of this new covenant, who goes between God and man, to bring them together in this covenant; to keep them

together, notwithstanding the sins of the people, and God's displeasure against them for sin; to plead with God for us, and to plead with us for God; and at length to bring God and his people together in heaven; they beholding and enjoying God in Christ, and God beholding and blessing them in Christ. This covenant is ratified by the blood of Christ sprinkled upon our consciences, as the blood of the sacrifice was sprinkled upon the altar and the sacrifice. This blood of Christ pacifies God, and purifies the consciences of men; and it speaks better things than that of Abel. It speaks to God in behalf of sinners; it pleads not for vengeance, as the blood of Abel, but for mercy. It speaks to sinners, in the name of God; it speaks pardon of their sins, peace to their souls, and demands their strictest obedience, and highest love and thankfulness. These expressions evidently are meant for different classes, but the Hebrews were especially to be convinced that unbelievers among them were doomed to the tremendous vengeance of God, both national and personal, from which there was no escape but by believing in the Lord Jesus, and cleaving to him.

See then that you refuse not his gracious call and proffered salvation, ver. 25. He now speaks from a higher and more glorious seat and throne, not from mount Sinai. He speaks now more immediately by his inspired word, and by his Spirit, which are his witnesses. He speaks not now any new thing to men; but by his Spirit speaks more powerfully and effectually. The guilt of those who refuse him is the greater, and their punishment will be more unavoidable and intolerable, ver. 25. God's dealing with men under the gospel, in a way of grace, assures us, that he will deal with the despisers of the gospel, in a way of judgment. The glory of the gospel appears, in that it was by the sound of the gospel, that the former dispensation and state were shaken and removed; and shall we despise the voice of God, that pulled down a church and state of such long standing, and of God's own building? It is by the sound of the gospel that a new kingdom is erected for God in the world, which can never be so shaken as to be removed.

From hence the apostle justly con-

cludes how necessary it is for us to obtain grace from God, to serve him acceptably; if not accepted of God under this dispensation, we shall never be accepted at all. We cannot worship God acceptably, unless we worship him with godly reverence and fear. It is only the grace of God enables us to worship God aright: nature cannot produce either the precious faith or the holy fear, necessary to acceptable worship. God is the same just and righteous God under the gospel as under the law. Though he is our God in Christ, and now deals with us in a more kind and gracious way, yet he is in himself a consuming fire; a God of strict justice, who will avenge himself on the despisers of his grace, and all apostates. And, under the gospel, the justice of God is displayed in a more awful manner. For we behold the Lord Jesus Christ made a propitiatory sacrifice, his soul and body an offering for sin, which is a display of justice far beyond what was seen and heard on mount Sinai when the law was given.

While we bless Him who speaks to us from the mercy-seat, and calls us to partake the privileges of Zion's citizens and the happiness of angels and glorified saints, through Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and the sprinkling of his precious blood, let us see to it that we have good evidence that our names are written in heaven, with those of true disciples, and not merely on earth with those of professed christians. Above all, let us see to it that we do not refuse Him who speaketh from heaven, with infinite tenderness and love; for how can those escape who turn from God in unbelief or apostasy, while he so graciously beseeches them to be reconciled, and to receive his everlasting favour? The inheritance of believers is secured to them, all things pertaining to salvation are freely given in answer to prayer; let us then seek for grace that we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.

18. "That could be touched."—*Schleiermacher*. In thus characterizing mount Sinai, it is intimated that it was an earthly mountain, not like mount Zion, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem.

21. As this is not expressly mentioned in the Old Testament, it probably means that Moses in effect said this; and it is implied, Exod. 19. 16, compare Deut. 9. 19.—*Holden*.

24. The blood of Abel called for vengeance on the murderer, see Gen. 4. 10, while that of Christ, the blood of sprinkling typified under the levitical law, assures us of atonement and pardon.—*Blountfield*.

25. Preachers do well to lay the edge of their threatenings to their own hearts, and to enroll themselves among the threatened, that bitterness towards the people may be seen to be removed, and their own sluggishness may be roused up; seeing they have none to preach to them but themselves.—*Tickson*.

CHAPTER XIII.

Exhortations to various duties, and to content with such worldly circumstances as Providence allot; also to pay respect to the instructions, example, and memory of faithful pastors, ver. 1-7. Cautions against being carried away with Jewish doctrines and ceremonies, which are fulfilled in Christ, 8-11. Further exhortations to duties, that relate to God, to our neighbour, and to those set over us in the Lord, 15-17. The apostle desires the prayers of the Hebrews, and prays for them, 18-21. Recommends this epistle to serious consideration; gives hopes of his own and Timothy's coming to them; and concludes with the usual salutations and benediction, 22

Ver. 1-7. The design of Christ in giving himself for us, is, that he may purchase to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. The apostle here calls the believing Hebrews to the performance of many excellent duties.

1. To brotherly love. The spirit of christianity is a spirit of love; faith works by love; true religion is the strongest bond of friendship. As brotherly love tends in various ways to benefit the church, so the enemy of our souls endeavours by every means to interrupt its exercise. Disputes about religion also often produce a decay of christian affection; the more christians grow in devout affection to God their heavenly Father, the more they will love one another for his sake.

2. To hospitality, ver. 2, especially to such as were driven, or travelled, from home for the sake of the gospel, and who were destitute of any accommodation except what the brethren supplied. To encourage this charity, he reminded them that some entertained angels unaware, as Abraham and Lot.

3. To christian sympathy, ver. 3. All are not called at the same time to deep sufferings, but are liable to the like su-

fferings; and should sympathise with them.

4. God's ordinance of marriage is honourable in all, and ought to be so esteemed by all. Christ honoured marriage with his presence and first miracle; it is honourable when undefiled. A dreadful, but just censure of impurity is given. God knows who are guilty of such sins, no darkness can hide them from him. He will call such sins by their proper names, not by soft phrases. He will judge offenders by their own consciences here, and set their sins in order before them, for their deep humiliation; and in the last day he will convict them, and condemn them.

5. To christian contentment, ver. 5, 6. The sin contrary to this grace and duty is covetousness, an over eager desire of the wealth of this world, envying those who have more than ourselves. Though it be a secret lust lurking in the heart, if not subdued, it will enter into our conversation, and discover itself in our speaking and acting. This duty and grace is, being satisfied and pleased with such things as we have, or present things; for past things cannot be recalled, and future things are only in the hand of God; what God gives us from day to day, we must be content with, though it fall short of what we have enjoyed heretofore, and though it do not come up to our expectations for the future. Having inexhaustible treasures in heaven, we may be contented with mean accommodations here. Those who cannot be so, would not be contented though God should raise their condition to their minds, for the mind would rise with the condition. Christians must abhor covetousness, whether poor or rich. Adam was in paradise, and yet not contented; yea, angels in heaven were not contented; but the apostle Paul, though abased and empty, had learned in every state, in any state, to be content. Observe what reason christians have to be contented with their present lot. God hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee, ver. 5, 6. This belongs to all the faithful servants of God. Old Testament promises may be applied to New Testament saints; this promise contains the sum and substance of all the promises; I will never, no, never leave thee, no, never forsake thee. Here are no less

than five negatives put together, to confirm the promise: the true believers shall have the gracious presence of God with him in life, at death, and for ever. From this comprehensive promise they may be assured of help from God, ver. 6. The Lord is my Helper; I will not fear what man shall do unto me. Men can do nothing against God, and God can make all that men do against his people, to turn to their good.

6. To the duty christians owe to their ministers. To those that are dead. Remember them that have had the rule over you. They ruled by personal presence and instruction, according to the word of God. Remember them—their preaching, their praying, their private counsel, their example. Follow their faith; be stedfast in the profession of the faith they preached to you, and labour after the grace of faith by which they lived and died so well. Consider the end of their conversation how comfortably, how joyfully they finished their course. The instructions and examples of ministers who have honourably and comfortably closed their testimony, should be particularly remembered by their survivors.

5. It literally rendered, the latter clause of this verse is, "No, I will not leave thee; no, no, I will not forsake thee." Thus repeatedly and strongly are we assured that there shall be no failure in the performance of the Divine promise.

7. "Remember your guides and leaders." The remaining part of the verse seems plainly to interpret it of former pastors, who had gone before them as their guides or leaders.—*Guyse.*

Ver. 8—14. Though their ministers were some dead, others dying, yet the great Head and High Priest of the church, the Bishop of their souls, ever lives, and is ever the same; and they should be stedfast and unmoveable, following Christ, and should remember that Christ ever lives to observe and reward their faithful adherence to his truths, and to observe and punish their sinful departure from him. Christ is the same in the Old Testament day, as in the gospel day, and will be so to his people for ever, equally merciful, powerful, and all-sufficient. The words seem to express all unchangeableness, as a Divine attribute which cannot be possessed by a mere creature. His Person is as unchangeable as his doctrine. his justice and holiness as unchangeable as his mercy and truth. All man-

kind will meet a Judge, exactly of the same character as he manifested when a Saviour on earth. The Hebrews therefore might confide in him to support and comfort them under all sufferings for his sake, even as he supported those who so happily finished their course. Jesus alone is an everlasting Friend, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. Still he fills the hungry, encourages the trembling, and welcomes repenting sinners; still he rejects the proud and self-righteous, abhors mere profession, and teaches all whom he saves to love righteousness, and to hate iniquity.

With our Divine Saviour there is no changeableness; his perfections are always the same, infinite in their glory; therefore let your submission to his authority, and your adherence to his truth, be firm and unwavering.—(95)

The apostle, having exhorted the Hebrews to trust in Christ and cleave to him, urges them not to be carried about with divers and strange doctrines, like clouds carried about with the wind. They should especially seek to have their hearts established in simple dependence on free grace, and the experience of the sanctification of the Holy Spirit, which would bring comfort to their hearts, and render them proof against delusion. While, if they paid attention to ceremonial distinctions, they would not be settled, nor might they expect spiritual profit from such observances, seeing those who had dwelt upon those things, and had looked no further, had derived no saving benefit from them. These did not make them more holy, nor more humble, nor more thankful, nor more heavenly.

Believers had, in the atonement of Christ, the substance of what had been shadowed forth by the sacrifices of the law, ver. 10. We have an altar. The christian church has its altar, not a material altar, but a personal one, and that is Christ. He is both our Altar, and our Sacrifice; he sanctifies the gift. The altars under the law were types of Christ; the brazen altar of his sacrifice, the golden altar of his intercession. And this altar furnishes out a feast for true believers, a feast upon the Sacrifice, spiritual strength and growth, and holy delight and pleasure. Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us, 1 Cor. 5. 7, and it follows, therefore, let us keep

the feast. The Lord's supper is the feast of the gospel passover.

Those who adhered to the tabernacle of the levitical dispensation, or returned to it again, excluded themselves from the privileges of this altar, from the benefits purchased by Christ. If they serve the tabernacle, they subject themselves to antiquated rites, and renounce their right to the christian altar.

This may be learned from their sin-offerings on the great day of atonement, which were the most eminent types of Christ's sacrifice, Lev. 16. 27. For they were forbidden by the law to eat of the propitiatory sacrifices whose blood was carried within the veil, but were commanded to burn them entirely without the camp. They can have no right, while they adhere to the legal institution, to partake of Christ's sacrifice, which answers to these propitiatory sacrifices.—(91.)

And that it might appear that Christ was really the Anti-type of the sin-offering, and, as such, might sanctify or cleanse his people with his own blood, he conformed himself to the type in suffering without the gate. This was a stinking specimen of his humiliation, as if he had not been fit either for sacred or civil society! And this shows how sin, which was the cause of the sufferings of Christ, is a forfeiture of all sacred and civil rights, and the sinner a common evil to all society, if God should be strict to mark iniquity.

Having showed that adherence to the levitical law would, according to its own rules, debar men from the christian altar, the apostle proceeds, Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp; go forth from the ceremonial law, from sin, from the world, and from ourselves. Living by faith in Christ, consecrated to God through his blood, let us willingly separate from this evil world, and bear the reproach of proud formalists. Let us be willing to bear his reproach, be willing to be accounted the off-scouring of all things, not worthy to live, not worthy to die a common death. This was his reproach, and we must submit to it; and we have the more reason, because, whether we go forth from this world to Christ or not, we must necessarily go forth in a little time by death; for here we have no continuing city. Sin, sinners, death, will not suffer us to

continue long here; therefore let us go forth now by faith, and seek in Christ the rest and settlement which this world cannot afford us.

8. "Jesus Christ is the same," &c.—*Scholefield*. He connects this verse with the following, "Jesus Christ is the same, therefore be ye the same," &c.

12. Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate of Jerusalem, and accordingly none can partake of the blessings of his sacrifice, till they come entirely off from the Jewish ordinances, that is, till they renounce Judaism, and embrace Christianity. Let us therefore go on to him without the camp, leave the profession of Judaism, and adhere to that of Christianity, cheerfully enduring all the opposition and ignominy to which it may expose us. Altar, in ver. 10, is put figuratively for the victim offered on it.—*Holden*.

Ver. 15—17. The Hebrews needed no atonement but that of Christ. Living on him by faith, they might disregard the offerings under the law, and offer at a distance from the temple, more acceptable sacrifices than the peace offerings, if, through Christ's mediation, they presented to God their continual and fervent praises and thanksgivings, gratefully acknowledging his loving-kindness towards them. The fruit of their lips would be more pleasing and honourable to him than the firstlings of their cattle. Let us bring our sacrifices to this altar, and to this our High Priest, and offer them up by him. The sacrifice of praise to God, which we should offer to God continually. In this are included all adoration and prayer, as well as thanksgiving. And we must, according to our power, communicate to the necessities of the souls and bodies of men; and with such sacrifices as these, adoration and alms thus offered up, God is well pleased; he will accept the offering with pleasure, and will accept and bless the offerers through Christ.

The apostle then states what is their duty to their living ministers, ver. 17. An implicit obedience, or absolute submission is not here required, but only so far as is agreeable to the mind and will of God revealed in his word. Yet Christians must submit to be instructed by their ministers, and not think themselves too wise, too good, or too great, to learn from them. And when they find that ministerial instructions are agreeable to the written word, they must

obey them. They have the rule over the people; they have no authority to lord it over the people, but to lead them in the ways of God, informing and instructing them, explaining the word of God to them, and applying it to their several cases. They are not to make laws of their own, but to interpret the laws of God; nor is their interpretation to be received without examination, but the people must search the scriptures, and so far as the instructions of their ministers are according to that rule, they ought to receive them as the word of God, which works effectually in those that believe. But no obedience or submission can be due to usurped dominion, to unfaithful stewards, or to blind guides. Faithful ministers watch for the souls of the people, to gain them, not to themselves, but unto Christ; they watch against every thing that may hurt the souls of men, and give them warning of dangerous errors, of the devices of Satan, of approaching judgments. They must give an account how they discharged their duty. If they can then give in an account of their own faithfulness and success, it will be a joyful day to them. Those souls who have been converted and confirmed under their ministry, will be their joy and their crown, in the day of the Lord Jesus. If they give up their daily account with grief, it will be the people's loss, as well as theirs. It is the interest of hearers, that, the account their ministers give of them may be with joy, and not with grief. If faithful ministers are not successful, the daily grief will be theirs, but the loss in the end will be the people's. Faithful ministers have delivered their own souls, but a fruitless and faithless people's blood and ruin will be upon their own heads.

Ver. 18—21. The apostle recommends himself, and his fellow-sufferers, to the prayers of the Hebrew believers, ver. 18. Ministers need the prayers of the people; and the more earnestly the people pray for their ministers, the more benefit they may expect from their ministry. They should pray that God would teach those who are to teach them; that He would make them vigilant, wise, zealous and successful; that he would assist them in all their labours, support them under their burdens, and strengthen

them under temptations. The apostle says, We trust we have a good conscience, ver. 18. Many of the Jews had an ill opinion of Paul, because he had cast off the Levitical law, and preached Christ. He here asserts his own integrity. He speaks in a humble style, teaching us not to be too confident of ourselves, but to maintain godly jealousy over our own hearts. A good conscience has respect to all God's commands, and all our duty. Those who have this good conscience, yet need the prayers of others. Conscientious ministers are public blessings, and deserve the prayers of the people. He desires their prayers also, because he hoped thereby to be the sooner restored to them; the best way to facilitate his return to them, and to make it a mercy to him and them, was, to make it a matter of prayer. When ministers come to a people as a return of prayer, they come with greater satisfaction to themselves, and success to the people. We should seek to bring in all our mercies by prayer.

He prays to God for them, being willing to do for them as he desired they should do for him, ver. 20. In this excellent prayer, let us observe, the title given to God—the God of peace, as fully reconciled to believers, who has made a way for peace and reconciliation between himself and sinners, and who loves peace on earth, and especially in his churches. He is the author of spiritual peace in the hearts and consciences of his people. Also, the great work ascribed to him; he hath brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus. Jesus raised himself by his own power; but the Father attested thereby that justice was satisfied, and the law fulfilled. He rose again for our justification; and that Divine power by which he was raised, is able to do every thing for us that we need. Notice also the titles given to Christ—our Lord Jesus, our Sovereign, our Saviour, and the Great Shepherd of the sheep, promised in Isa. 40. 11, declared by himself to be so, John 10. 14, 15. Ministers are under-shepherds, Christ is the Great Shepherd. His care and concern are for them; he feeds them, leads them, and watches over them. The way is pointed out in which God is reconciled, and Christ raised from the dead—through the

blood of the everlasting covenant. The blood of Christ satisfied Divine justice, and so procured Christ's release from the prison of the grave, as having paid our debt, according to an eternal covenant or agreement between the Father and the Son.

How firm a covenant is that which hath its foundation in the blood of the Son of God! His blood who is the great Emmanuel, the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person, who came down on purpose into this world, and united himself with the nature of man, purposely that he might have something mortal about him, somewhat that could die, that by his death he might ruin the designs of him that had the power of death; and might procure that stability should be given to the covenant of life and peace, even this covenant.—(40.)

The mercy prayed for is stated, ver. 21. The perfection of the saints in every good work, is the great thing desired by them, and for them; and that they may at length be fitted for the employment and happiness of heaven. The way in which God makes his people perfect, is by working in them always what is pleasing in his sight, and that through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever. There is no good thing wrought in us, but it is the work of God. He works in us, before we are fit for any good work. No good thing is wrought in us by God but through Jesus Christ, for his sake and by his Spirit. And, therefore, eternal glory is due to him, who is the Cause of all the good principles wrought in us, and all the good works done by us. To this let every one seek to say, Amen.

Ver. 22—25. The apostle entreated them to take in good part the word of exhortation, warning, and encouragement he had sent from love to their souls. And he had written but a short letter in comparison with the importance of the subjects treated in it.

So bad is man, even believers, through remainders of their corruption, that when the most important, comfortable doctrine is delivered to them for their own good, and that with the most convincing evidence, there is need of earnest en-

treaty and exhortation that they would bear it, and not fall out with it, neglect it, or reject it.—(3.)

Timothy had been a prisoner, doubtless for the gospel, but now was set at liberty. The imprisonment of faithful ministers is an honour to them, and their enlargement matter of joy to the people. Opportunities of writing to the churches of Christ, are desired by the faithful ministers of Christ, and are very pleasant to them.

The apostle closes with salutations, and a solemn, though short benediction. The salutation is from himself to them, directed to them all, ministers and people. And from the christians in Italy to them. It is good to have the law of holy love and kindness written in the hearts of christians one towards another. Religion teaches men true civility and good-breeding. It is not morose or uncourteous. The solemn, though short benediction is, Grace be with you all. Amen. Let the favour of God be toward you, and his grace continually working in you, and with you, bringing forth the fruits of holiness, as the first-fruits of glory. When the people of God have been conversing together by word or writing, it is good to part with prayer, desiring for each other the continuance of the gracious presence of God, that they may meet together in the world of praise.

Macknight says, St. Paul, in his epistle to the Hebrews, has largely explained and proved the *priesthood* and *intercession* of Christ, and has shown that his death is considered by God as a *sacrifice for sin*, not in a metaphorical sense, and in accommodation to the prejudices of mankind, but on account of its real efficacy in procuring pardon for penitents; that Christ was constituted a Priest by the oath of God; that all the priests and sacrifices that have been in the world, but especially the levitical priests and sacrifices, were emblems of the *priesthood, sacrifices, and intercession* of Christ; and that sacrifice was instituted originally, to preserve the memory of the revelation which God made at the fall, concerning the salvation of mankind through the death of his Son, after he should become the Seed of the woman.

THE GENERAL EPISTLE OF JAMES.

THE writer of this epistle appears to have been James, the son of Alphaeus or Cleopas, called the brother or near relative of our Lord, Gal. 1. 18, 19. He is also called James the less, to distinguish him from James the brother of John, who was put to death by Herod Agrippa, Acts 12. 2. He was considered especially as an apostle to the jews, and appears to have been early appointed president or bishop of the christian church at Jerusalem, where he resided, and was distinguished among his brethren in the first council, held there A. D. 49. From his distinguished piety he was surnamed "the just." *Hegeippus*, an early ecclesiastical historian, relates that his life was ended by martyrdom, about A. D. 62, during the interval between the governments of Festus and Albinus, when the jews were left at liberty to exercise their turbulent passions. It is related that the jews demanded of James a public declaration of his sentiments concerning Christ, when he avowed his faith that Jesus was the Messiah. The enraged jews upon this threw him from the battlements of the temple, and as he survived the fall, they killed him by blows with a club, while praying for his murderers.

Considerable discussion has existed respecting this epistle, but it is referred to by several early fathers, and is inserted in the early syriac version of the New Testament, which is an argument of great weight, as the jewish believers to whom it was addressed, must be the best judges of its authenticity. It appears from the address, when considered in connexion with the contents, to have been written to jewish christians, about A. D. 61, to warn them against the vices which abounded among the jews, and to set them right as to the doctrine of justification by faith, showing that it was not a mere assent to the truths of the gospel, but a living, fruitful, evangelical faith, which worketh by love. Also, to support and comfort the christians under the persecutions they then suffered, which were mostly from the unbelieving jews. In order to this, the destruction of the jewish nation is spoken of as approaching swiftly.

The contents may be classed thus:—

I. Exhortations, ch. 1. (1) To joyful patience under trials, ver. 2—4. (2) To ask wisdom of God, in faith and with steadfastness, ver. 5—8. (3) To humility, ver. 9—11. (4) To constancy under temptations, since God is not the author of sin, ver. 12—18. (5) To receive the word of God with meekness, and to reduce it to practice, ver. 19—27.

II. Censures (1.) Undue respect of persons, ch. 2. 1—9; wilful transgression of one commandment violates the whole law of God, ver. 10—12. (2.) Mistaken notions of justification are corrected and illustrated by examples, ver. 13—26. (3.) The affectation of being doctors or teachers, ch. 3. 1, 2. Hence is shown the fatal effects of an unbridled tongue, ver. 3—12, contrasted with the nature of earthly and heavenly wisdom, ver. 13—18. (4.) Those who indulge their lusts and passions are condemned, ch. 4. 1—5. (5.) Also the proud are exhorted to repentance and submission to God, ver. 6—10. (6.) Also censoriousness and detraction, with exhortations to constant dependence upon God, enforced by the shortness and uncertainty of the present life, ver. 11—17. (7.) The condemnation of the covetous, and those who trust in riches, ch. 5. 1—6.

III. Cautions and exhortations (1.) To patience and meekness under trials, in the hope of speedy deliverance. (2.) Against swearing, with admonition to prayer and praise, ver. 12, 13. (3.) Concerning visiting the sick, and the power of prayer, ver. 14—18. (4.) Encouragement to attempt the conversion of sinners, and the recovery of offending brethren, ver. 19, 20.

This epistle of James is one of the most instructive writings in the New Testament. Being chiefly directed against particular errors at that time introduced among the jewish christians, it does not contain the same full doctrinal statements as the other epistles, but presents an admirable summary of the practical duties incumbent on all believers. But the leading truths of christianity are set forth throughout, and on attentive consideration it will be found entirely coincident with St. Paul's statements concerning grace and justification, while it abounds with earnest exhortations to the patience of hope and obedience of faith and love, interspersed with warnings, reproofs, and encouragements, according to the characters addressed. The truths laid down are very momentous, and necessary to be maintained; and the rules for practice, as here stated, are such as ought to be observed in our times, as well as in preceding ages. *Manton* says, it is needful at the same time to carry on the doctrine both of "faith" and "manners," and to show duties together with encouragements, that we may not content ourselves with a barren and unfruitful knowledge of Christ. In him there are no dead and sapless branches, faith is not an idle grace; wherever it is it brings forth fruit in good works.

Those who regard this epistle as more in the style and manner of a jewish prophet than a christian apostle, are evidently mistaken. It is in part doctrinal, and abounds with those spiritual views and sentiments which are peculiar to the gospel, nevertheless, the writer's main object was to enforce the necessity of those practical duties which are essential to a justifying faith, and which constitute the perfection of the christian life. The style, though plain and simple, is beautiful and perspicuous. In the apostle's exhortations to practical religion, there is an earnestness and pathos which render them powerful appeals to the heart, while there breathes throughout a christian spirit of meekness, gentleness, and benignity, eminently calculated to attract and persuade.—*Hulden*.

At the conclusion is a note, showing the accordance in doctrine between the apostles St. Paul and St. James.

CHAPTER I.

The apostle prefaces his epistle with a general salutation of the jews in their dispersion, ver. 1. The christian converts among them, are directed how to make a due improvement of their troubles, how to apply to God under them, and how to behave in prosperous and in adverse circumstances, 2—12. They are warned not to impute to God any temptations to sin; but to look upon all evil as proceeding from themselves, and all good from God, 13—18. The duty of watching against a rash and furious temper, and of receiving the word of God with meekness, and living according thereto, 19—23. The difference between vain pretences and real religion, 26, 27.

Ver. 1—12. The apostle James is called by the evangelist the brother of our Lord, yet it was his glory to serve Christ in the spirit, rather than to boast of being akin according to the flesh. Let us learn to prize this title above all others in the world—the servants of God and of Christ. We cannot acceptably serve the Father, unless we are also servants of the Son, confessing that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father, Phil. 2. 11.

James addressed the twelve tribes still existing, though scattered, by various calamities and different motives, into distant countries, but he principally intended the christians among them. Knowing their afflicted and persecuted condition, he exhorted them to esteem their trials a cause for rejoicing. For they might know, from the word of God and their own experience, that the trial of their faith, by which its strength and nature were proved, tended to bring them to a resigned waiting frame of mind, connected with meekness and perseverance in well doing. Philosophy may instruct men to be calm under their troubles; but christianity teaches them to be joyful; such exercises proceed from God's love. In them we are made conformable to Christ our Head; by suffering in the ways of righteousness, we serve the interests of our Lord's kingdom among men, and edify the body of Christ: and our trials in the way of our duty will brighten our graces now, and our crown at last. But to get benefit from these trials, patience must perform its perfect work; believers must submissively rely on God's promises and obey his commands,

without being induced by their sufferings to use sinful means of deliverance, or to yield to murmuring or despondency. Thus patience would work freely and perfectly, and bring them into a meek and resigned state of mind, rendering them fitted and prepared for the duties of their stations.

The faith spoken of here as tried by afflictions, consists in belief of the power and promise of God, and in fidelity and constancy to the Lord Jesus. Christian patience must work. Stoical apathy and christian patience are widely different; by the one men become, in some measure, insensible of their afflictions, but by the other they become triumphant in and over them. Let us take care, in times of trial, that patience, and not passion, are set to work in us: whatever is said or done, let patience have the saying and doing of it. Let us not allow the indulgence of our passions to hinder the operation of patience; let us give it leave to work, and it will work wonders in a time of trouble. We must do nothing to weaken it. When we hear all God appoints, and as long as he appoints, with a humble obedience to him, and when we not only bear troubles, but rejoice in them, then patience hath its perfect work. When the work of patience is complete, then the christian is entire, and nothing will be wanting; it will furnish us with all that is necessary for our christian race and warfare, and will enable us to persevere to the end, and then its work will be ended, and crowned with glory.

Prayer is recommended to suffering christians, ver. 5. But we should not pray so much for the removal of an affliction, as for wisdom to make a right use of it. And who is there that does not want wisdom to guide him under trials, both in the regulation of his own spirit and temper, and in the management of his affairs? To be wise in trying times is a special gift of God, and to him we must look for it, in whom are all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Let us confess our want of wisdom to God, and daily ask it of him. It is expressly promised that it shall be given, ver. 5. Here is something in answer to every discouraging turn of the mind, when we go to God, under a sense of our own weakness and folly, to ask for wisdom. He to whom we are sent has

it to give; and he is inclined to bestow it upon those who ask. Nor is there any fear of his favours being so limited as to exclude any humble petitioning soul; for he gives to all men. And when we feel we want a great deal of wisdom, let us recollect, he gives liberally. Lest we should be afraid of going to him, it is added, he upbraideth not. If, after all, any should say, This may be the case with some, but I fear I shall not succeed, let such consider how express the promise is, to *any* that asketh it shall be given. Thus the substance may be obtained by the believer, while the world is deceived by the empty shadow.

God never reproaches his people with the frequency of their addresses to him for mercy, and is never weary of doing them good. It is men who excuse themselves by what they have done already. Men recount former favours to deny present requests, and we are afraid to press a friend, lest kindness be worn out by frequent use. But what a difference there is between an earthly and our heavenly Friend! We need not fear to urge God to acts of love and kindness.—(92.)

But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering, ver. 6. There must be no staggering at the promise of God through unbelief, or a sense of our particular disadvantages in our own part. Here we see that steadiness of mind constitutes another duty under affliction; He that wavereth, is like ^a wave of the sea, driven with the wind, and tossed. To be sometimes lifted up by faith, and then thrown down again by distrust; to mount sometimes towards the heavens, with an intention to secure glory, and honour, and eternal life; and then to sink again in seeking the ease of the body, or the enjoyments of this world; is very fitly compared to a wave of the sea ^a that rises and falls, swells and sinks, just as the wind tosses it higher or lower. A mind that has but one single and prevailing regard to its spiritual and eternal interest, and that keeps steady in its purposes for God, will grow wise by afflictions, will continue fervent in devotion, and rise superior to trials and oppositions.

For the cure of a wavering spirit and a weak faith, the apostle shows their ill effects, ver. 7. The success of prayer is spoiled hereby. In asking for Divine

and heavenly wisdom, we are not likely to prevail, if we do not prize it above the greatest things in this world. A wavering faith and spirit have an ill influence upon all our lives, ver. 8. A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways. When our faith and spirits rise and fall with second causes, there will be great unsteadiness in all our conversation and actions. This may not always expose men to contempt in the world; but it is certain that such ways cannot please God, nor procure any good for us in the end. Those who are only religious by starts, and have no abiding, realizing sense of the truth, or dependence on God's promises, have no reason to expect to receive any thing from him, while thus aiming to unite contrary interests and unsettled in their principles, for want of faith in the word of God. Such undecided persons differ from weak believers who look only to God for help; though harassed with fears lest there should be something in their case to exclude them from the benefit. While we see so many of these double-minded men on every side, who are so unstable in all their ways, we are reminded to pray for an increase of faith, that we may waver no more, but trust in the Lord only.

The holy, humble temper of a christian is described; and both poor and rich are directed on what grounds to build their joy and comfort, ver. 9-11. Those of low degree are to be looked upon as brethren. Poverty does not destroy the relation among christians. Also believers may be rich in the world. Both these are allowed to rejoice. No condition of life puts us out of a capacity of rejoicing in God. Those of low degree may rejoice, if they are exalted to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom of God, and the rich may rejoice in humbling providences, as they produce a lowly and humble disposition of mind. It is an honour to suffer for the sake of Christ. All who are brought low, and made lowly by grace, may rejoice in the prospect of their exaltation at last in heaven.

Rich people have reason to be humble and low in their own eyes. All outward splendour and distinction must soon pass away, as the flowers among the grass wither and lose their beauty sooner than the green blade.

Worldly wealth is a withering thing. Riches are too uncertain, too inconsiderable to make any great or just alteration in our minds. As a flower fades before the heat of the scorching sun, so shall the rich man fade away in his ways. His projects, counsels, and managements for this world, are his ways; in these he shall fade away. Then, let him that is rich rejoice, not so much in the providence of God, that makes him rich, as in the grace of God, that makes and keeps him humble; and in the trials and exercises that teach him to seek happiness in and from God, and not from perishing enjoyments. Let him rejoice that he is made willing to ask the blessings of salvation in the same way with the poorest of his brethren, and to consider himself as charged with a larger stewardship, of which an account must shortly be rendered.

A blessing is pronounced on those who endure their exercises and trials, ver. 12. It is not every man who suffers that is blessed; but he who with patience and constancy goes through all difficulties in the way of duty. Afflictions cannot make us miserable, if it be not our own fault. A blessing may arise from them, and we may be blessed in them. They are so far from taking away the believer's happiness, that they really increase it. When he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life—when he is approved of the great Judge. To be approved of God is the great aim of a christian in all his trials. The tried christian shall be a crowned one; and the crown he shall wear will be a crown of life. It will be life and bliss to him, and will last for ever. Believers only bear the cross for a while, but they shall wear the crown to eternity. Upon this blessedness the righteous sufferer may most surely depend; for when heaven and earth shall pass away, this word of God shall not fail of being fulfilled. But notice, that the future reward comes, not as a debt, but by a gracious promise. And observe, the enduring temptations must be from a principle of love to God and to our Lord Jesus Christ, otherwise we are not interested in the promises which the Lord hath given to those who love him. And the crown of life is promised, not only to great and eminent saints, but to all who have the love of God reigning in their hearts. Every

soul that truly loves God, shall have its trials in this world fully recompensed in that world above, where love is made perfect. Blessed are those who patiently endure trials, and manfully resist temptations; for through much tribulation shall they enter into the kingdom of God.

1. It is certain, from the testimony of the sacred writers and of Josephus, that there were considerable numbers of israelites mingled with the jews, sufficient to authorize the former to speak of the twelve tribes as constituting but one body with the jewish nation—*T. H. Burne*. And it appears from *Philo* and *Josephus*, and also from heathen writers, that the jews were widely dispersed at this period, and to be found in almost every nation.

10. We ought so to use prosperity, that no man therefore please himself, but be so much the more void of pride.—*Reformer's Bible*. The words, as applied to the rich man, signify that he is brought by the gospel to be lowly in heart poor in spirit—*Bloomfield*.

Ver. 13—18. The commands of God and the dispensations of his providence, try men's hearts, and discover the dispositions which prevail in them. But nothing which is sinful in the heart and conduct can be ascribed to God. It is impossible for him in the most minute degree to deviate from justice, truth, and goodness. He does not tempt any man by putting evil into his heart, suggesting it to his thoughts, or necessitating the commission of it. He is not the author of the cross, though his fiery trial exposes it. It is very bad to sin; but it is much worse, when we have done amiss, to charge it upon God. Those who lay the blame of their sins, either upon their constitution, or upon their condition in the world, or pretend they are under a fatal necessity of sinning, wrong God, as if he were the author of sin. Afflictions, as sent by God, are designed to draw out our graces, but not our corruptions. The origin of evil and temptation is in our own hearts. The combustible matter is in us, though the flame may be blown up by outward causes. Let not hypocrites, who under trials are tempted to throw up their profession, or believers who through unwatchfulness are overcome in some conflict, venture for a moment to say or think they are tempted of God. But every man is tempted to commit sin, when the inordinate desires of his heart induce him to seize the bait, with which Satan entices him. Draw away, signifies being forcibly compelled. Enticed

signifies beguiled by allurements and deceitful representations.

When vehement desire after any object, which cannot be obtained without sin, is conceived in the heart, through the suggestions of Satan, or the allurements of outward objects, indulgence is admitted; and, from this, actual transgression is brought forth; and when this is completed, it brings forth death as its offspring: and nothing but the mercy and grace of God through Christ Jesus, can prevent the final destruction of the sinner. Stop the beginnings of sin therefore, or else all the evils it produces must be wholly charged upon us. God has no pleasure in the death of men, as he has no hand in their sin; but both sin and misery are owing to themselves. While we are the authors and procurers of our sin and misery, God is the Father and Fountain of all good, ver. 16, 17. Do not err, do not wander from the word of God. Do not stray into erroneous opinions, and go off from the standard of truth; the things received from the Lord Jesus, and by the direction of his Spirit. Let corrupt men run into what notions they will, the truth, as it is in Jesus, stands thus—That God is not, cannot be the author and patroniser of any thing that is evil; but must be acknowledged as the Cause and Spring of every thing that is good, ver. 17. If any dare foolishly to charge God with being the author of sin, in any way or on any pretence, he may expect some dreadful rebuke for his presumption.

As the sun is the same in its nature and influences, though the earth and clouds, oft interposing, make it seem to us to vary, by its rising and setting, and by its different appearances, or entire withdrawal, when the change is not in it; so God is unchangeable, and our changes and shadows are not from any mutability, or shadowy alterations in him, but from ourselves. What the sun is in nature, God is in grace, providence, and glory; and infinitely more. Every good gift is from him. As the Father of lights, he gives the light of reason. Also the light of learning. The light of Divine revelation is more immediately from above. The light of faith, purity, and all manner of consolation, is from him. So that we have nothing good but what we receive from God; as there is no evil or sin in us, or done by us, but

what is owing to ourselves. We must own God as the Author of all the powers and perfections in the creature, and the Giver of all the benefits we have in and by those powers and perfections. But none of their darkensses, their imperfections, or their evil actions, are to be charged on the Father of lights; from him proceeds every good and perfect gift, both pertaining to this life and that which is to come.

As every good gift is from God, so particularly our regeneration, and all the holy, happy consequences of it, must be ascribed to him, ver. 18. Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth. A true christian is a creature begotten anew. He becomes as different a person from what he was, before the renewing influences of Divine grace, as if he were formed over again. The origin of this good work is of God's own will, not from any good foreseen in us, or done by us, but from the good-will and grace of God. The means are pointed out; the word of truth, that is, the gospel, 1 Cor. 4. 15. This gospel is indeed a word of truth, or it could not produce such real, such lasting, such great and noble effects. We may rely on it, and venture our immortal souls on it. And we shall find it a means of our sanctification as it is the word of truth, John 17. 17. The end and design of God's giving renewing grace is, that we should be first-fruits of his creatures; that we should be God's portion and treasure, a peculiar property to him, as the first-fruits were; and that we should become holy to the Lord, as the first-fruits were consecrated to him. We should give God all the glory of this happy change, and consecrate all our faculties to his service, that we may be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures.

13. God does not infuse evil; that which draws to it is our own concupiscence. He does not give an evil nature or evil habits; these are from ourselves. He does not enforce either physically, by urging and inclining the will to act; or morally, by counselling, or persuading, or commanding to it. God uses many a moving persuasion to draw us to holiness, not a hint to encourage us to sin.—*Manton*.

14 The original words have much force, alluding to the method of drawing fishes out of the water with a hook concealed under the bait, which they greedily devour.—*Dodridge*.

17. "The Father of lights, with whom is no parallax or tropical shadow"—*Wakefield, Jerb,* and others. The first term signifies astronomically the several positions in which the sun ap-

pears to us every day, at the rising, in the meridian, and when it sets. The second is applied not to the daily but yearly course of the sun, as it moves towards the northern or the southern tropic; the word rendered "shadow," signifies the variations of the shadows, according to the various motions of the sun above mentioned—God is not liable, like the celestial orbs, to variations; he sends forth light without mixture of shade, his gifts without niggardliness or restraint.—*Fulpy. See Hammond.*

—God may change his sentence, the outward threatening or promise, but not his inward decree. He may will a change, but not change his will.—*Manton.*

Ver. 19—25. An angry and hasty spirit is soon provoked to all things by afflictions; and errors prevail through the workings of our vile and vain affections: but the renewing grace of God, by the word of the gospel, teaches us to subdue these. Instead of censuring God under our trials, let us open our ears and hearts to hear what he designs by them. This may also be understood as referring to the disputes and differences that christians, in times of trial, run into. It behoved every one to be ready to hear admonitions and counsels; to be slow to speak, not rash or dogmatical in their decisions, not hasty to teach others, or disputing of things beyond their depth, not speaking from a talkative humour. They must be slow to wrath, not giving way to angry tempers, bitterness of spirit, or fondness for controversy, assured that the wrath of man was not the proper means of promoting religion or inducing men to embrace the gospel, or to lead holy lives. And if men would govern their tongues, they must govern their passions. The worst thing we can bring to a religious controversy, is, anger. This is not to be trusted, however it pretends to be raised by concern for what is just and right. Wrath is a human thing, and the wrath of man is opposed to the righteousness of God. Those who pretend to serve the cause of God thereby, show that they are acquainted neither with God nor his cause.

Here is an exhortation to lay apart and to cast off with abhorrence, as a filthy garment, all sinful practices; especially "the overflowings of malignity," which many indulged under pretence of zeal, while it proceeded from pride and other hateful passions. Sin is a defiling thing; it is filthiness itself. There is abundance of evil in us, to be watched against, there is superfluity of

naughtiness. It is not enough to restrain evil affections, but they must be cast from us, or laid apart, Isa. 30. 22. This must extend to sins of thought and affection as well as of speech and practice—every thing corrupt and sinful. The word of God could only profit them as an engrafted word, living and growing in the soul by faith and love, as the principle of a new nature, changing all their views, dispositions, and affections into conformity to its own true holiness, so producing good fruit in their lives. Being thus received and engrafted, it would effect the complete salvation of the soul, as the instrument of the new creating Spirit of God.

We must yield ourselves to the word of God, with humble and tractable minds; this is to receive it with meekness. Being willing to hear of our faults, and taking it not only patiently, but thankfully; desiring also to be moulded and formed by the doctrines and precepts of the gospel. And, in all our hearing, we should aim at the salvation of our souls. It is the design of the word of God to make us wise to salvation; and those who propose any meaner or lower ends to themselves in attending upon it, dishonour the gospel, and disappoint their own souls. We should come to the word of God, both to read it and hear it, as those who know it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth, Rom. 1. 16.

We are taught what is to be done after hearing, ver. 22. The most attentive and the most frequent hearing of the word of God will not avail, unless we are also doers of it. If we heard a sermon every day of the week, and an angel from heaven were the preacher, yet, if we rested in hearing only, it would never bring us to heaven. There must be inward practice by meditation, and outward practice by true obedience. It is not enough to remember what we hear, and to be able to repeat it, give testimony to it, and commend it, and write it, and preserve what we have written; the end and object of this is that we may be doers of the word. Bare hearers are self-deceivers; their reasoning is manifestly deceitful and false, when they would make one part of their work discharge the obligation they lie under to another; or persuade themselves, that filling their heads with

notions is sufficient, though their hearts are empty of good affections and resolutions, their lives fruitless of good works. Self-decent will be found the worst deceit at last.

As a looking-glass shows us the spots and defilements upon our faces, that they may be remedied and washed off, so the word of God shows us our sins. There are glasses that flatter people; but the word of God is no flattering glass. If we flatter ourselves, it is our own fault; the truth, as it is in Jesus, flatters no man. Let the word of truth be carefully attended to, and it will set before us the corruption of our nature, the disorders of our hearts and lives; it will tell us plainly what we are. St. Paul describes himself as insensible of the corruption of his nature, till he saw himself in the glass of the law, Rom 7. 9. The word of God is a faithful mirror to show us the deformity and the pollution of our souls; still more, it teaches us how to remove them, and how to adorn ourselves with the beauties of holiness.

Thus, when we attend to the word of God, so as to see our true state and condition, and to rectify what is amiss, by the glass of God's word, this is to make a proper use of it. The mere hearer may sometimes have short-lived convictions of his sinfulness, but not liking the view given of his state, heart, and character in the glass of God's word, and not really desiring a thorough change, he soon loses sight of his fleeting discoveries, and remains ignorant of himself and of transforming grace. Many, when under the word, are affected with their own sinfulness, misery, and danger, and acknowledge the evil of sin, and their need of Christ; but, when their hearing is over, all is forgotten, convictions are lost, good affections quickly vanish, and pass away like the waters of a land-flood; he straightway forgets. Also the word of God discovers how our sins may be done away, and our souls clothed with the righteousness of Jesus Christ. Our sins are the spots the law discovers; Christ's blood is the laver the gospel shows. But in vain do we hear God's word, and look into the gospel-glass, if we go away, and forget our spots, instead of washing them off, and forget our remedy, instead of ap-

plying to it. This is the case with those who do not hear the word as they ought.

The word looketh, implies deepness of meditation. The believer does not glance upon, but looks into the perfect law of liberty. Also diligence of inquiry, not content with what is offered to the first thoughts, but accurately searching the mind of God as revealed in his word. And liveliness of impression; so looking as to find the virtue of it in the heart; as 2 Cor. 3. 18, by conversing with the word we carry away the beauty and glory of it in our spirits.—(92)

Those are blessed, who hear aright, and use the glass of God's word as they should, ver. 25. Whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein; the gospel is a law of liberty, or of liberation, giving us deliverance from the Jewish law, and from sin and guilt, and wrath and death. The ceremonial law was a yoke of bondage, the gospel of Christ is a law of liberty. Divine revelation is a perfect law; nothing can be added to it. In hearing the word, we look into this perfect law; we look into it for counsel and direction; but then only as we should, when we study it, till it turn to our spiritual life, engrafted and digested in us; when we practise it as our work and business; and model the temper of our minds by it. Those who thus continue in the law and word of God, are, and shall be, blessed in their deed, blessed in all their ways. The Lord would this way lead the believer to the knowledge of his truth and salvation. His gracious recompense hereafter would be connected with his present peace and comfort.

Every part of Divine revelation has its use, in bringing the sinner to Christ for salvation, and in directing and encouraging him to walk at liberty, by the Spirit of adoption, according to the holy commandments of God. In this way he shall find out whatever needs repentance, forgiveness, and cleansing away, in his heart and conduct. And mark the distinctness of scripture phrase. The apostle does not say, *for* his deeds, that any man is blessed, but *in* his deed. This is a way in which we shall certainly find blessedness, but not the cause of it. This blessedness does not lie in knowing, but in doing the will of God, John 13. 17. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them. It is not talking, but

walking, that will bring us to heaven. Christ will become more precious to the believing soul, and by his grace he will become more meet for the inheritance of the saints in light.

22. "A doer of the word." The expression evidently imports a habit from the course or way of life followed. The phrase of a worker of iniquity is used to represent the course of those persons who trade in sin. Their business is to work sin; and they often exert their strength and power that way. So we are to understand by a ~~doer~~ of the word of God; one whose business of his life is to do it in a continual course — *Hove*.

Ver. 26, 27. We must distinguish betwixt a vain religion, and that which is pure and approved of God. There are great disputes in the world about this matter: what religion is false and vain, and what is true and pure. Let the holy scripture in this place determine the question; here it is plainly declared.

1. What is a vain religion, ver. 26. When men are more concerned to seem religious than really to be so, it is a sign their religion is vain. Religion is not a vain thing; but it is possible for people to use it as a vain thing, if they have only a form of godliness, and not the power. In a vain religion there is much censuring, reviling, and detraction of others. The not bridling the tongue, readiness to speak of the faults of others, to censure them as holding errors, or to lessen their wisdom and piety, are signs of a vain religion. The man who has a detracting tongue, cannot have a truly humble gracious heart. Censuring is a pleasing sin, extremely compliant with nature: it evidences a man's being in a natural state. These sins of the tongue were very prevalent then, as now, as this epistle shows, and it is a strong sign of a vain religion, to be carried away with the evil of the times. It has ever been a leading sin with hypocrites, that the more ambitious they have been to seem well themselves, the more free they are in censuring and running down others. But there is neither strength nor power in that religion which will not enable a man to bridle his tongue. In a vain religion a man deceives his own heart; he goes on detracting from others, and trying to make himself seem somebody; at last the vanity of his religion is completed by deceiving his own soul.

2. Here is plainly declared wherein true religion consists, ver. 27. It is the glory of religion to be pure and undefiled; not mixed with the inventions of men, nor the corruptions of the world. False religions may be known by their impurity and uncharitableness. Our religion is not adorned with ceremonies, but purity and charity. And a religion which is pure, should be kept undefiled. That religion is pure and undefiled, which is so before God and the Father. True religion teaches us to do every thing as in the presence of God. Compassion and charity to the poor and distressed, is a great and necessary part of true religion. Visiting is here put for all manner of relief we are capable of giving to others; the fatherless and widows are particularly mentioned, because they are generally most neglected or oppressed; but we are to include all objects of charity. But an unspotted life must accompany unfeigned love and charity. The world is apt to spot and blemish the soul, it is hard to live in it, and have to do with it, and not be defiled; but this must be our constant endeavour. The things of the world taint our spirits, if we are much conversant with them; but the sins and lusts of the world defile them woefully indeed.

We serve God most comfortably when we consider him as a Father in Christ. Having an interest in God, his work will be sweet to us. Mercies yield the more sweetness when they come, not only from a Creator, but from a Father. And duties are done with the more confidence when we come into the presence of God, not as servants, but as sons. — (92.)

Pure religion, the acceptable holy service of God, undefiled by corrupt motives and carnal passions, exercised in the sight of God, even the Father, with his approval, by his adopted children in Christ Jesus, consists in humble, self-denying love to others for the Lord's sake, from love to him; and in keeping at a distance from the sinful pursuits, interests, pleasures, maxims, and fashions of this evil world. Our true religion is equal to the measure in which these things have place in our hearts, experience, and conduct. And while we depend on the Divine mercy in Christ Jesus, for all things pertaining to salvation, let us remember that nothing availeth in Christ Jesus, but

faith that worketh by love, purifies the heart, subdues carnal lusts, and obeys God's commands.

27. The original word, here rendered widows, conveys the idea of privation in general; hence the passage refers, generally, to persons in affliction or distress.

CHAPTER II.

All notions and professions of faith are shown to be vain, if not productive of impartial love and justice to others, the poor as well as the rich, ver. 1-13. A strong argument from the nature of things, illustrated by reference to fruitless pretences of pity to the poor, and by a body without a soul. Also from the instances of Abraham and Rahab, is shown the necessity of good works to prove the sincerity of faith, which otherwise is dead, and will be of no more advantage, than the faith of devils, 14-26.

Ver. 1-7. Those who profess faith in Christ as the Lord of glory, must not respect persons on account of mere outward circumstances and appearances, in a manner inconsistent with their profession of being disciples of the lowly Jesus. For instance, if any one richly adorned came into their assemblies, and another should at the same time enter, a poor man in mean apparel, and they should accommodate the one in gay clothing with a chief place, while they contemptuously bade the poor man stand in some inconvenient place, or sit down upon the ground at their feet, would not such conduct prove that they were partial in forming their opinions respecting others? In professing the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, we should not show respect to men, so as to cloud or lessen the glory of our glorious Lord; however any may think of it, this is certainly a sin.

The close of ver. 1, forcibly represents the Saviour as the Sovereign of glory, the Fountain of all such honour as is real, just, and worthy of being esteemed. That which constitutes true glory, and is a basis for just esteem and honour, is something which depends upon Christ. He it is who has the right and the power to confer real greatness.—(95.)

St. James does not here encourage rudeness or disorder; civil respect must be paid; but never such as to influence the proceedings of christian societies in disposing of the officers of the church,

or in passing the censures of the church, or in any thing that is purely a matter of religion. There is many a man, whose wickedness renders him vile and despicable, who yet makes a figure in the world; and on the other hand there is many a humble, heavenly, excellent christian, who is clothed meanly; but neither he nor his christianity should be thought worse of on this account.

To bring us to a right sense of things it is good to question our own consciences. Psal. 4. 4. But many live long in the world, some forty or fifty years, and all this while they cannot be brought to discourse with their own hearts. But this questioning of conscience will be of use in humbling work, for faith, showing the danger of not believing, and for the work of obedience. Thus questioning ourselves is of great use in every part of the holy life. Let us be more frequent in this, and in every thing take occasion to discourse with our souls.—(92.)

This respect of persons was owing to the evil and injustice of the thoughts. Ye are judges according to those unjust estimations and corrupt opinions which you have formed to yourselves. Trace your partiality, till you come to those hidden thoughts which accompany and support it, and you will find them to be exceedingly evil. The deformity of sin is never truly and fully discerned, till the evil of our thoughts be disclosed, Gen. 6. 5. As places of worship cannot be built or maintained without expense, it may be proper that those who contribute thereto should be accommodated accordingly, but were all persons more spiritually-minded, the poor would be treated with more attention than usually is the case in worshipping congregations.

Did they not know that God chose the poor of this world; that his chosen people mostly were in that rank of life? From thence it must be evident that a lowly state was most favourable for inward peace and for growth in holiness, most suited to show forth the power and blessed effects of his grace. God would have given them riches and honours of this world, if they would have done them good, seeing that he had chosen them to be rich in faith, interested in all the unsearchable riches of Christ, and made heirs of his kingdom, which he had promised to bestow on all who loved him. It was thus

evident that the Lord especially favoured those of low condition, though many despised and slighted them as beneath their regard, paying attention to the wealthy persons who occasionally came to their assemblies, though rich men often oppressed the poor believers, and blasphemed the name of Christ. Let them consider how commonly riches are incentives to vice and mischief, to blasphemy and persecution; consider how many calamities are sustained, and what great reproaches are thrown upon God and religion, by men of wealth, power, and worldly greatness; and it will make this sin appear exceedingly sinful and foolish, in setting up that which tends to dishonour the worthy name by which they are called. The name of Christ is a worthy name; it reflects honour, and gives worth to them who wear it.

Let us watch and pray against corrupt judgments and evil thoughts in all cases, but especially in the worship of God, before whom all are regarded according to their real characters. Let the poor hence learn to rejoice in their spiritual privileges, and the rich not to trust in their earthly treasures; for the poor despised believer will soon be comforted, and the wealthy oppressor and blasphemer will suffer for ever.

The name of christian presses us to care and holiness. Remember what Christ did; you are called after his name, 2 Tim. 2. 19. Shall I, who am named by the name of Christ do this? And his name is an argument we may use to God in prayer for grace and mercy; his name is upon you.—(92.)

1. Faith is here taken generally for the profession of christian religion, or the manifestations of the grace of Christ in the souls of his people. Respect of persons is had, when in the same cause we give more or less to any one than is meet, because of something in his person which has no relation to that cause. So in Christ's time the question was common, Do any of the rulers believe in him?—*Manton*.

2. *Manton*, *Macknight*, and others consider that the context refers to judges and judicial causes, and that the word "synagogue" rendered "assembly," shows that the first christians held courts for deciding civil causes in the places where they assembled for public worship. *Bloomfield* observes that the original word may also be understood of an assembly for worship, as Heb 10. 25 and that on either occasion respect of persons would be alike improper. "One who wears rings on his fingers" is the literal rendering of the compound word here denoting a rich man.

3. The rule among the ancient jews was, that when a poor man and a rich man pleaded

together in judgment, both should sit, or both should stand. *Gill* says, In the courts of judicature of the jews, two men, though of different rank, might not have on different apparel when together in court. The judge was to say to the more honourable person, Either clothe him as thou art, or be clothed as he is.

5 Rich in faith. Either in regard of high measures and raised degrees of faith, as Abraham is said to be strong in faith, Rom. 4. 20. Or rich, in opposition to worldly poverty, as noting the recompense that is made up to them for their outward poverty, in their hopes and privileges. God is said to choose the rich in faith; to be rich in faith, as in Rom. 8. 29, chosen to be like his Son.—*Manton*.

Ver. 8—13. The rule for christians to walk by, is settled in the scriptures. It is not great men, nor worldly wealth, nor corrupt practices among professors themselves, that must guide us, but the scriptures of truth. The scripture gives us this as a law, to love our neighbour as ourselves; it still remains in full force. This law is a royal law, it comes from the King of kings; and the pretence of observing this royal law, when it is interpreted with partiality, will not excuse any unjust proceedings. But if christians had respect of persons, treating the poor with contempt, and paying court to the rich, they committed sin and acted unjustly, consequently were convicted by the law as transgressors.

For whosoever shall keep the whole law, if he offend in one point, wilfully allowedly, and so as to think he shall be excused in some matters, because of his obedience in others, he is guilty of all. He incurs the same penalty, and is liable to the same punishment, as if he had broken it in other points. This shows what vanity it is to think that our good deeds will atone for our bad deeds, and it plainly puts us upon looking for another atonement. This is further illustrated, ver. 11. For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now, if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law. One, perhaps, is very severe in the case of fleshly lusts, another in what tends to ruin the health, break the hearts and destroy the lives of others; whereas those who look at the authority of the Lawgiver, will see the same reason for condemning the one as the other. Obedience is then acceptable, when all is done with an eye to the will of God; and disobedience is to be condemned,

in whatever instance it be, as it is a contempt of the authority of God.

If our obedience be sincere it will be universal, so far as we are acquainted with our Lord's will. The chain, though consisting of many links, is broken, when one link is broken. According to the covenant of works, one breach of any one command brings a man under condemnation, from which no obedience, past, present, or future, can deliver him. And, according to the covenant of grace, the allowed and habitual transgression of any part of the moral law, as given to us by the Mediator, proves a professor to be unreconciled to God. The whole tenour of revelation, and the gospel itself, by which men are set at liberty from condemnation and every yoke of bondage, will condemn all who did not repent of and forsake every sin, and obey the commandments of God in sincerity and simplicity, from faith in the Lord Jesus and love to him. In vain do men urge they are not under the law while they allow themselves in known sin; the gospel itself will consign them to the just vengeance of God. We must all be judged by this law of liberty; men's eternal condition will be determined according to the gospel: there will be no relief to those whom the gospel condemns, nor will any accusation lie against those whom the gospel justifies. It concerns us so to speak and act now, as becomes those who must shortly be judged by this law of liberty.

This shows us the happiness of those who are in Christ. The law to a believer is a law of liberty, to another it is the law of bondage and death. We may serve Him without slavish fear. Christians are led by sanctified affections, motives of grace, and considerations of gratitude. Look to yourselves then whether you are in Christ or not. How sweet is it when we delight in righteousness, and do not complain of the commandment, but of sin; and the transgression is looked upon as a bondage rather than duty. The same apostle that groaned under the body of death, delighted in the law of the Lord after the inner man, Rom. 7. God's restraints are not a bondage, but our own corruptions. And how sweet is this, when the command gives us a warrant, and love a motive!—(92)

Our being judged by the gospel,

should engage us especially to be merciful to others, ver. 13. For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath showed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment. The doom passed upon impenitent sinners at last, will be judgment without mercy. Such as show no mercy now, shall find no mercy in the great day. But those will be instances of the triumph of mercy, in whom mercy rejoices against judgment. It concerns all to consider among which they shall be found; and let us remember, that blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. Thus God has deemed it his glory and joy to pardon and bless those who might justly have been condemned at his tribunal; and his grace teaches those who are partakers of his mercy to copy it in their conduct towards their afflicted or offending brethren; and all, who do not show mercy to others, must not expect it themselves.

The law is not repealed, for it is an unchangeable rule, according to which God proceeds till all be fulfilled, either by the creature or upon the creature, by us or by our Surety. Either we must have Christ to fulfil it, or for the breach of it we must perish for ever. And an interest in grace cannot consist with a known sin. If you abuse grace, you make grace your enemy. It shows us what reason we have to pray that God would not deal with us according to our iniquities, our manner of dealing either with him or men; and let us walk with the greater awe and strictness.—(92.)

10. This passage meets the error of the Jews, who divided the precepts of the law into great and little, and taught that if a man observed one great precept, it would compensate for many evil actions, and conciliate the Divine favour.

12. The law in the hands of Christ is a law of liberty. Not without the law, but under the law, 1 Cor 9 21. There is a yoke though not a burden, though there is not rigour there is a rule. If the law were not an obligation, there could be no sin; for where there is no obligation, there is no transgression, 1 John 3 4. Even natural conscience would be offended at a doctrine which should make murder and adultery no sins. Therefore it is the vain conceit of profane men to think that the gospel frees us from the obligation of the law, because it frees us from the curse of it, for then all duty would be will-worship, and sin a mere conceit.—Manton.

Ver. 14—26. The apostle here argues against those who substituted a notional belief of the gospel, for the whole of evangelical religion, as many now do. What did it profit a man

though he said he had faith, if he had no works of true piety and holiness to which he could appeal, as the fruits and evidences? No doubt, true faith alone, interesting men in Christ's righteousness, atonement, and grace, saves their souls; but it produces holy fruits, and is shown to be genuine by its effect on their works, while speculative assent to any form of doctrine, or mere historical belief of any facts, essentially differ from this saving faith. That faith which does not save, will not really profit us; a bare profession may sometimes seem to be profitable, and gain the good opinion of pious people; and it may procure, in some cases, worldly good things, but what profit will this be, for any to gain the world, and to lose their souls? What doth it profit?—Can this faith save him? All things should be accounted profitable or unprofitable to us, as they tend to forward or hinder the salvation of our souls. And faith does not profit, if it do not save, but will aggravate our condemnation and destruction at last. For a man to have faith, and to say he has faith, are two different things; the apostle does not say, If a man have faith without works; for that is not a supposable case. The drift of this place of scripture is plainly to show, that an opinion, or speculation, or assent, without works, is not faith.

The worthlessness of such an assent is shown by an illustration. If any should express kindness to persons in want or distress, and at the same time give nothing to the relief of their necessities, would such a love profit either the one or the other? Even so that faith which has no works springing from it, is dead and worthless, and as it is such, it cannot justify the possessor. For it is alone, separated from repentance, love to God and man, and every holy affection.

To such a character may be said, Thou professiest to believe, but disgracest that profession by thy conduct. Do not expect to be considered a believer, till thou shonest thy faith by the good works of a holy life. Thou censurest me as not sufficiently zealous in respect of faith, but it is far better to evince it by my works, than by disputing about it. There is no possible way to show that we really believe in Christ, but by being diligent in good

works from gospel motives, and for gospel purposes. Men may boast to others, and be conceited of that of which they are really destitute.

A faith of bare speculation and knowledge is as the faith of devils, ver. 19. If thou art content with bare assent to articles of faith, and mere speculations upon them, thus far the devils go. And as their faith and knowledge only serve to excite horror, so in a little time will thine. They tremble, not out of reverence, but hatred and opposition to that one God whose existence they believe. They tremble at the thoughts of his omnipotent power, and righteous vengeance, yet continue to hate his perfections, government, cause, and service.

There is not only to be *assent* in faith, but *consent*, not only an assent to the truth of the word, but a consent to take Christ. There must be an act that is directly and formally conversant about the person of Christ. We must not mistake some general acknowledgment of the articles of religion for faith. True believing is not an act of the understanding only, but a work of the whole heart, Acts 8. 37.—(92)

We are taught that he who boasts of faith without works, is to be looked upon at present as a foolish condemned person, ver. 20. Vain man—denotes just detestation of such men as are empty of good works, yet boasters of their faith. It plainly declares them fools and objects in the sight of God. Faith without works is dead, not only as void of all operations which are proofs of spiritual life, but as unavailable to eternal life; such nominal believers as rest in a bare profession of faith, are dead while they live.

We are taught that a justifying faith cannot be without works, from two examples, Abraham and Rahab. St. Paul, in Heb. 11. shows that the faith both of Abraham and Rahab produced the good works of which St. James speaks; and which are not to be separated from faith as justifying and saving. By what Abraham did in offering his son, it appeared that he truly believed. Upon this ground the words of God himself plainly put this matter, Gen. 22. 16. Thus the faith of Abraham was a working faith, ver. 22, it wrought with his works, and by works was made perfect. And by this means we come to the true

sense of that scripture which saith, ver. 23, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness. Thus he became the friend of God. Faith, producing such works, advanced him to very peculiar favours. We see then, ver. 24, how that by works a man is justified, comes into such a state of favour and friendship with God, and not by faith only; not by a bare opinion or profession, or believing without obeying; but by having such a faith as is productive of good works.

The works evinced the reality and holy efficacy of his faith, and proved him accepted before God. Abraham's justification by faith took place many years before he was commanded to sacrifice Isaac, but his obedience in that respect proved him to be a sound character, and justified him before men as a true believer and devoted servant of God. Not that this will be a second justification by works in any sense; the atonement of Christ, depended on by living faith, alone can justify a sinner before God from first to last; but the good works of the true believer, from the time when he received Christ, to the time of his death, distinguish this living faith from the dead faith of mere professors; justify him against the charge of hypocrisy, and prove him entitled to the gift of God, even eternal life, through Jesus Christ.

Where we must deny our own reason, affections, interests, it is an action fit to try a believer. Let us then see what is observable in this action of Abraham, that we may go and do likewise. God tried him in his faith, and he reconciled the commandment with the promise. How easily could we have disobeyed, using pretences and reasons of religion, but Abraham he offered Isaac.—(92.)

Such an acting faith will make others, as well as Abraham, friends of God. Thus Christ says to his disciples, John 15. 15, I have called you friends. All transactions betwixt God and the truly believing soul are easy, pleasant, and delightful. There is one will and one heart. God rejoices over those who truly believe, to do them good; and they delight themselves in him.

The second example of faith justifying with and by works, is Rahab, ver. 25. The former instance was of one renowned for his faith all his life long. This instance shows that faith will save the

worst, and that it is evidenced by proper works. Rahab believed the report she had heard of God's powerful presence with Israel; and proved her faith sincere, for at the hazard of her life, she received the messengers, and sent them out another way. Observe here, the wonderful power of faith, in transforming and chauging sinners. The regard which an operative faith meets with from God, to obtain his mercy and favour. And where great sins are pardoned, there must be self-denial. Rahab must prefer the honour of God, and the good of his people, before the preservation of her own country. Her former acquaintance must be discarded, her former course of life entirely abandoned, and she must give signal proof and evidence of this. After she is justified, her former character is remembered, not so much to her dishonour, as to glorify the rich grace and mercy of God. This conduct proved her faith to be living or influential, it showed that she believed with her heart, not merely by an assent of the understanding.

And now upon the whole matter, this conclusion is drawn, ver. 26; As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also. These words some read, As the body without the breath is dead, so is faith without works: and then they show that works are the companions of faith, as breathing is of life. Others read them, As the body without the soul is dead, so faith without works is dead also: and then they show that as the body has no action, nor beauty, but becomes a loathsome carcase, when the soul is gone; so a bare profession without works is useless, yea offensive.

Let us then take heed. For the best works, without faith, are dead; they want their root and principle. It is by faith that any thing we do is really good; as done with an eye to God, in obedience to him, and aiming principally at his acceptance. And the most plausible profession of faith, without works, is dead; as the root is as dead when it produces no fruit. Faith is the root, good works are the fruits, and we must see to it that we have both. This is the grace of God wherein we stand, and we should stand to it. God will not regard a heartless assent to truth, any more than he will reward a hollow profession of love. Would we be, as Abraham, the

friends of God, we must believe his promise, trust his mercy, and obey his commands.

Consider, there is no middle state; we must either be the friends of God, or his enemies. Will it not make a man's heart sink within him to consider, I must either live God's friend, or God's enemy? Dare any one venture as a matter of deliberation to say, I will live God's enemy? There is no neutral state; you must go from day to day, up and down in this world, either as God's friends, or as his enemies. But consider also that this friendship with God is not an impossible or an impracticable thing. God invites, and will he refuse those whom he invites? The gospel is sent to beseech us in Christ's name and stead to be reconciled unto God. What a great thing it is to have such a Friend, who invites us to cast our care upon him, for he will care for us. What was said concerning Abraham and his faith, and his friendship with God, was not written for him alone, but for us too, that we are to live in the same faith and friendship with God as he did. And mind, it is to be continued through your whole course, otherwise you tifle with him. Offer up thyself to Him to be his reconciled one, his devoted one, his servant, his friend. We hear many discourse to this purport, but with too many the matter all comes to nothing, because they do not make a solemn business of it.—This living to God, as it is the consequence of faith, which justifies and will save, continually obliges us to do nothing against him with self-allowance.—(40.)

14 Or rather, 'Can that faith save him?'—*Valpy*. "Will that faith save him?" Such questions are the strongest way of denial.—*Manton*

17. It is dead. Being alone—it is dead by itself, or dead in itself, how great soever it be, it is all dead.—Faith alone justifies, but not that faith which is alone, not a naked assent, or bare profession. It is dead, because it does not unite us unto Christ. A living faith will be active. Never think of living with Christ, unless you live in Christ, and such bring forth much fruit.—*Manton*. See the note at the end of this epistle.

18. "Show me thy faith by thy works, and I will also in return, show thee my faith by my works."—*Doddridge*, who follows a reading of the original which is well supported, and which, as *Valpy* states, has the same sense as that followed by our translators.

—It is not meant without faith. Works without faith are as a building without a foundation.—*Manton*.

21. In offering.—*Scholefield*.

22. Works are so far from being the chief and more perfect cause of justification, that they are not respected there at all. Faith rather gives a value to works, than works to faith, Rom. 14. 23; Heb. 11. 4—6. Works do not perfect faith by communicating and imputing their perfection to it, but by stirring and exercising the natural vigour of it. He that has a mind to work would not be without his tools; and who would be without faith that makes conscience of duty?—*Manton*.

CHAPTER III.

Cautions against an arrogant assuming temper and behaviour, and against the mischief of an unsanctified and unruly tongue, ver. 1—12. The excellency of heavenly wisdom, which discovers itself in purity, meekness, and peace, in opposition to that which is litigious, carnal, and worldly, 13—18.

Ver. 1—12. We are not forbad doing what we can to direct and instruct others in their duty, or to reprove for what is amiss; but we must not make our own sentiments the standard to try others. Those who set up for judges and censurers, shall receive the greater condemnation. They that are curious to spy out the faults of others, and arrogant in passing censures upon them—let them expect that God will be as extreme in marking what they say and do amiss. Were we to think more of our own mistakes and offences, we should be less apt to blame other people. Self-justifiers are commonly self-deceivers. We are all guilty before God. Let us learn to be severe in judging ourselves, but charitable in our judgments of other people.

We are to govern our tongues; he who is pained by tongue-sins, and who takes care to avoid them, is an upright man, and has a sign of true grace. He that offends not in word, thereby not only proves himself a sincere christian, but an advanced and improved christian. For the wisdom and grace which enable him to rule his tongue, will enable him to rule his actions. This is here illustrated by two comparisons.

1. The more quick and lively the tongue is, the more should we take care to govern it. Otherwise, as an unruly horse runs away with his rider, so an unruly tongue will serve those who have no command over it. But let resolution and watchfulness, under the influence of the grace of God, bridle the tongue.

2. As the helm is a very small part of the ship, so is the tongue a very small part of the body; but the right governing the helm or rudder will steer and turn the ship, and a right management of the tongue is, in a great measure, the government of the whole man. And from hence we should learn to make the due management of our tongues more our study; because, though little members, they are capable of doing much good, or much harm.

We are taught to dread an unruly tongue, as one of the greatest evils. It is compared to a little fire placed among a great deal of combustible matter, which soon consumes all before it, ver. 5, 6. There is such an abundance of sin in the tongue, that it may be called a world of iniquity. Defiling passions are kindled, vented, and cherished by this unruly member. And the whole body is often drawn into sin and guilt by the tongue. Eccles. 5. 6. It setteth on fire the course or order of nature. The affairs of mankind are thrown into confusion by the tongues of men. Every age of the world, and every condition of life, private or public, affords examples of this. And it is set on fire of hell. Hell has more to do in promoting the fire of the tongue than men are generally aware of. The devil is expressly called a liar, an accuser of the brethren; and whenever men's tongues are employed in any sinful ways, they are set on fire of hell. Where the tongue is guided and wrought upon by fire from heaven, there it kindles good thoughts, holy affections, and ardent devotions. But when it is set on fire of hell, as it is in all undue heats, there it is mischievous; producing rage and hatred, and things which serve the designs of the devil. We see how very hard it is to govern the tongue, ver. 7, 8. The most savage beasts, as well as creatures of the greatest strength, have been tamed or subdued by men; so have birds; even serpents have been made familiar and harmless; and things in the sea have been subdued and taken by men, and made serviceable to them. Yet no man can tame the tongue without Divine grace and assistance. The apostle does not intend to represent it as impossible, but as extremely difficult, requiring great watchfulness, and pains, and prayer, to keep it in due

order, for it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.

(Other sins decay with age, this many times increases; and we grow more forward and pettish as natural strength decays, and the days come on in which we have no pleasure. When other sins lose their vigour, being tamed and subdued by the infirmities of old age, the spirit often grows more tart, nature being drawn down to the dregs, and the expressions become more passionate.—(92.)

No man, however wise or powerful, has ever been able by laws, punishments, or persuasions, to stop the progress of this evil, which effects far more tremendous desolations in communities, churches, and families, and does more to render men miserable here, as well as hereafter, than all the venomous and savage creatures in the world can do. So that it not only needs to be watched, and guarded, and governed, as much as an unruly beast, or a hurtful and poisonous creature; but much more care and pains will be needful, to prevent mischievous outbreakings and effects of the tongue. However, if we bless God as our Father, it should teach us to speak well of, and kindly to all who bear his image, ver. 9, 10. That tongue which addresses the Divine Being with reverence, cannot, without the greatest inconsistency, turn upon fellow-creatures with reviling, brawling language. Yet out of the same mouth often proceed the language of love, gratitude, and adoration to God, and that of enmity and rancour against men. These things ought not so to be; and, if such considerations were always at hand, surely they would not be so. That tongue confutes itself, which at one time pretends to adore the perfections of God, and to refer all things to him, and at another time condemns even good men, if they do not come up to the same words or expressions used by it.

Contrary effects from the same causes are not to be found in nature, and cannot be consistent with grace, ver. 11, 12. True religion will not admit of contradictions, and a truly religious man can never allow them in his words or his actions. How many sins would be prevented, if men would always be consistent with themselves. No fountain from the same opening sends forth water, sometimes sweet, at other times bitter; sometimes fresh, at other times salt;

and every plant produces its own fruit, and no other. But pious and edifying language is the genuine produce of a sanctified heart, and none who understand christianity, expect to hear curses, lies, boastings, and revilings from a true believer's mouth, any more than they expect the fruit of one tree from another.

Facts prove that more professors succeed in bridling their senses and appetites, than in duly restraining their tongues; and while we view with regret the sad effects produced by this unruly evil, and recollect with thankfulness that when the Lord has filled the heart with holy affections, he makes use of this member to spread the word of truth and righteousness, let us particularly inquire what use we make of our own tongues. Depending on Divine grace, let us take heed to bless and curse not; let us aim at consistency in our conversation and conduct. Let us see to it that our behaviour to men shows the sincerity of the love we profess towards God, and that our conduct out of the place of worship, corresponds with our language and professions in it. There are many things, even among christians, that ought not to be as they are.

4. "Directed at the will of the steersman."—*Shuttleworth*. The word signifies impetus, or impetus of the mind.—*Schleusner*. It is not the first inclination or agitation of the mind, but it is the will itself under an earnest inclination, such as is usual with them who govern ships by the helms in storms. Hereunto the act of willing is properly ascribed, and he in whom it is proved to be, is a person. Thus a will acting with understanding and choice, as the principle and cause of outward actions, is ascribed to the Holy Ghost, 1 Cor. 12 11.—*Owen*.

6. "The tongue is that which sets on fire and destroys the whole course of life, from boyhood to old age; by raising and nourishing hatred and enmity, it renders life a scene of misery"—*Bloomfield*. The circle of nature. *Doddridge*, who says, Perhaps it may intimate, how the mischief done by the tongue often comes round. A consideration which, even if not intimated by the expression, is well worthy the attention of every wise man.

9. "Our God and Father."—*Scholefield*.

Ver. 13—18. These verses show the difference between men's pretending to be wise, and their being really so; between the wisdom which is from beneath, from earth or hell, and that which is from above. A truly wise man lays up a good stock of knowledge, and then applies it to a good use, by his good conversation and conduct. Words that inform, and heal, and do good, are the marks

of wisdom. And true wisdom may be known by its works. Conversation, here not only refers to works, but to the whole of a man's practice. Let him show out of a good conversation his works. True wisdom does not lie in good notions or speculations, so much as in good and useful actions. He who thinks well, or he who talks well, is not, in the sense of the scripture, allowed to be wise, if he does not live and act well.

True wisdom may be known by the meekness of the spirit and temper. It is a great proof of wisdom, prudently to bridle our own anger, and patiently to bear the anger of others. We have the glorying of those taken away, who are of a contrary character; and their wisdom exposed in all its boasts and productions, ver. 14—16. If any indulge bitter envyings in their hearts, censuring and calumniating others who differ, let them not glory in such tempers and behaviour, as though they arose from zeal or faithfulness; let them not belie the truth by pretending such conduct was the necessary effect of it; or that those were indifferent who did not dispute in the same violent manner. For this wisdom was not descended from above, but was earthly, as it sought earthly distinctions and advantages, and was of an earthly origin. It was natural, the result of such principles as unregenerate men are actuated by; it was devilish, being at first derived from Satan, and reflecting the image of his pride, maliginity, and falsehood.

Envy and strife are opposed to the meekness of wisdom; envy and wisdom cannot dwell together in the same heart. Envy excites strife; strife seeks excuse by vain-glorying and lying; and then ensue confusion and every evil work. Those who live in malice, envy, and contention, live in confusion; and are liable to be provoked and hurried to any evil work. Such disorders raise and strengthen temptations, and involve men in guilt. One sin begets another; and it cannot be imagined how much mischief is produced; there is every evil work. Such wisdom descends not from above, but springs from earthly principles, acts on earthly motives, and is intent on serving earthly purposes. It is sensual, indulging the flesh, and making provision to fulfil the lusts and desires of it. Or, according to the original

word, it is animal or human; the mere working of natural reason. And it is devilish; such wisdom being the wisdom of devils, to create uneasiness, and to do hurt; and being inspired by devils. Those who are lifted up with such wisdom as this, must fall into the condemnation of the devil. Heavenly wisdom, described by the apostle James, is nearly allied to the christian love, described by the apostle Paul, and both are so described that every man may ascertain the reality and the degree of his attainments in them.

True wisdom is God's gift. It is not gained by conversing with men, or by the knowledge of the world, but it comes from above. 1. It is pure in respect of its objects, motives, and tendency, without mixture of maxims or aims that would debase it; and it is free from iniquity and defilements, not allowing any known sin, but studious of holiness both in heart and life. 2. The wisdom that is from above is peaceable. Peace follows purity, and depends upon it. Those who are truly wise, do what they can to preserve peace, that it may not be broken; and to make peace, that where it is lost, it may be restored. In nations, in families, in churches, in all societies, and in all transactions, heavenly wisdom makes men peaceable. 3. It is gentle, not standing upon extreme right, not being furious about opinions; urging our own beyond their weight, or theirs who oppose us, beyond their intention; not being overhearing in conversation, nor harsh in temper. 4. Heavenly wisdom is easy to be entreated, very persuadable, either to what is good, or from what is evil. There is an easiness that is weak and faulty; but it is not blamable easiness to yield to the persuasions of God's word, and to all just and reasonable counsels or requests of our fellow-creatures; or to give up a dispute, where there appears a good reason, and a good end can be answered thereby. 5. Heavenly wisdom is full of mercy and good fruits; inwardly disposed to every thing kind and good, both to relieve those who want, and to forgive those who offend, and actually to do this whenever proper occasions offer. 6. Heavenly wisdom is without partiality, without suspicion, or free from judging; making no undue surmises, or differences in our conduct towards one person

more than another. Without wrangling; not acting the part of sectaries, and disputing merely for the sake of a party; or censuring others, on account of their differing from us. Free from bigotry for one party or against another. The wisest are least apt to be censurers. 7. That wisdom which is from above, is without hypocrisy. It has no disguise or deceit. It cannot fall in with those managements which the world counts wise, which are crafty and guileful; but it is sincere, and open, and steady, and uniform, and consistent with itself. And true wisdom will go on to sow the fruits of righteousness in peace, and thus, if it may be, to make peace in the world, ver. 18. And that which is sown in peace, will produce a harvest of joy. Let others reap the fruits of contentions, and all they can propose to themselves by them; but let us peaceably sow the seeds of righteousness, and our labour shall not be lost. For light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart; and the work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever, Psal. 97. 11.

May the Lord bestow upon us the wisdom that is from above, may the purity, peace, gentleness, teachableness, and mercy shown in all our actions, and the fruits of righteousness abounding in our lives, evidence that God has replenished us with this excellent gift.

CHAPTER IV.

Here are cautions against corrupt affections, the root of wars and quarrels, and the bane of prayer; and against inordinate love of this world, as enmity with God, who gives grace to the humble, ver. 1-6. Directions to proud and carnal professors to submit and betake themselves to God, and resist the devil, and to abandon and lament their sinful courses, in order to their being exalted, 7-10. Exhortations to all professing christians to speak candidly one of another, and to undertake no affairs of life without constant regard to the will and providence of God, 11-17.

Ver. 1-6. All the contests that desolate the earth or harass the church, originate from the lusts of man's apostate nature, and his pleasure in acting against God's commands. Prevailing lusts make a war within, as well as

fightings without; impetuous passions and desires, first war in the members, and then raise feuds in the nation. There is war between conscience and corruption, and there is war also between one corruption and another; and from these contentions in themselves arise quarrels with each other. May we not say of fightings and strifes among relations and neighbours, that they come from those lusts which war in the members? From lust of power and dominion, lust of pleasure, or lust of riches, from some one or more of these, arise all the contentions that are in the world; and since all wars and fightings come from the corruptions of our own hearts, it is the right method, for the cure of contention, to mortify those lusts that war in the members.

Ye lust, and have not; ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain, ver. 2. You covet great things for yourselves, and think you shall secure pleasure and happiness by overthrowing every thing which thwarts your wishes; but inordinate desires are not to be appeased and satisfied, even by obtaining the things desired. Ye cannot thus gain the happiness sought after. Worldly and fleshly lusts are distempers which will not allow contentment or satisfaction in the mind. Sinful desires and affections exclude prayer, and the working of our desires toward God. You do not succeed, because you do not pray; you do not consult God in your undertakings, you do not commit your way to him, and make known your requests to him, but follow your own corrupt views and inclinations, therefore you meet with continual disappointments.

You may discern whether you seek God's glory by the working of your own thoughts. Do you please yourself with suppositions of revenge, or with hopes of the vindication of God's name? In prayers for strength do you not entertain your spirit with whispers of vanity, dreams of applause? Also by the manner of praying; is it absolutely for God's glory, in all other things with submission to his will? It is enough to a gracious heart if God will glorify his name; but carnal aims make the spirit impetuous and impatient of check or denial. And let us beware that we do not abuse or misuse the mercies received,

by the disposition of the heart when prayers are accomplished.—(92.)

How often lusts spoil our prayers, and make them an abomination to God, ver. 3. Some kept up the form of religion and prayed for temporal prosperity; but they received it not, because they asked amiss. Learn from hence, in all our worldly affairs, and in our prayers to God for success in them, to see that our ends are right. When men follow their worldly business, and ask of God prosperity, they often ask with wrong aims and intentions; they ask God to give success in their undertakings, not that they may glorify their heavenly Father, and do good, but that they may be enabled to eat better meat, and drink better drink, and wear better clothes, and so gratify their pride, vanity, and voluptuousness. If we thus seek the things of this world, it is just in God to deny them; while, if we seek any thing, that we may serve God with it, we may expect he will either give what we seek for, or give us hearts to be content without it, and give opportunities of serving and glorifying him in some other way. When we speed not in our prayers, it is because we ask amiss; we do not ask for right ends, or not in a right manner; not with faith, or not with fervency: unbelieving and cold desires beg denials; and we may be sure that when our prayers are rather the language of lusts than of graces, they will return empty.

Here is a decided warning to avoid all criminal friendships with this world, ver. 4. Worldly people are here called adulterers and adulteresses, because of their unfaithfulness to God, while they give their best affections to the world. Covetousness is elsewhere called idolatry, and it is here called adultery; it is a forsaking Him to whom we are devoted and espoused, to cleave to other things. This brand is put upon worldly-mindedness—that it is enmity to God. A man may have a competent portion in this life, and yet keep himself in the love of God; but he who sets his heart upon the world, who will conform to it, rather than lose its friendship, he is an enemy to God. Whosoever will act upon this principle, to keep the smiles of the world, cannot but show himself in spirit, and in his actions too, an enemy to God, Matt. 6. 24. This we

are bound most clearly to declare. From hence arise wars and fightings, even from this adulterous, idolatrous love of the world, and serving it; for what peace can there be among men, so long as there is enmity toward God? Think seriously what the spirit of the world is, and you will find that you cannot suit yourselves to it as friends, without its occasioning your being envious, and full of evil inclinations. Did not those to whom the oracles of God were committed, know that the friendship of the world was enmity to God? So that any one who resolved at all events to be upon friendly terms with the world, must be the enemy of God. Did then the jews, or the loose professors of christianity, think the scripture spake in vain against this worldly-mindedness? or does the Holy Spirit who dwells in all christians, or the new nature which he creates, produce such fruit?

The spirit that dwelleth in us, lusteth to envy, ver. 5. Natural corruption principally shows itself by envying, and there is a continual propensity to this; in emulating such as we see and converse with, and seeking the things possessed and enjoyed by them. This way of the world is the certain consequence of being friends to the world; for there is no friendship without a oneness of spirit. Christians, to avoid contentions, must avoid the friendship of the world. must show that they are actuated by nobler principles, and that a nobler spirit dwells in them; for if we belong to God, he gives more grace than to live and act as the generality of the world do. The spirit of the world teaches men to be churls, God teaches them to be bountiful. The spirit of the world teaches us to lay up, or lay out for ourselves, according to our own fancies; God the Holy Spirit teaches us to be willing to communicate to the necessities, and to the comfort of others, so as to do good to all about us, according to our ability. The grace of God is contrary to the spirit of the world, and will correct and cure the spirit that naturally dwells in us; where he gives grace, he gives another spirit than that of the world. The servants of Christ are the best friends to the world, but they cannot possess its friendship, without acting contrary to their profession.

Observe the difference God makes be-

tween pride and humility, ver. 6. God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble. This is the language of the Old Testament; it declares that God will save the afflicted people, but will bring down high looks, Psa. 18. 27. He scorneth the scornors, and giveth grace unto the lowly, Prov. 3. 34. The proud resist God; in their understanding resist the truths of God, in their will resist the laws of God, in their passions resist the providence of God, therefore no wonder that God resists the proud. Who can describe the wretched state of those who make God their enemy? He will fill the faces of such with shame, as have filled their hearts with pride. God gives honour and help to the humble; where God gives grace to be humble, there he will give all other graces. Wherever God gives true grace, he will give more; for to him that hath, and useth what he hath aright, more shall be given. He will especially give more grace to the humble, because they see their need of it, pray for it, and : thankful for it, and such shall have it.

1. The jews were prone to sedition and religious disputes. Both originated from the same source, lusts, or favoured and cherished passions—*Bloomfield*.

4. An enemy may be reconciled, but enmity never can be reconciled.—*Lough*.

5. "Do ye think that the scripture speaketh in vain? Does the Spirit that dwelleth in us lust to envy." The passage which the present english translation represents as a quotation from scripture is no where to be found there, nor does it make a clear argument in connexion with the context. May not the import of the whole passage be, "Seeing it is so necessary to mortify this love of the world, seek for the Holy Spirit's help to enable you to it, and do not think that his grace will be withheld; for is he grudgingly affected? Nay, but he giveth more grace."—*Scholerfield*.

6. Other sins are more hateful to man, while pride seemeth to have a kind of bravery in it. But the Lord hateth it because it is a sin that sets itself most against him. Other sins are against God's laws, this is against his being and sovereignty, it lifts up the heart against God. And as it rises against his being, so against his providence—it entertains crosses with anger, and blessings with disdain, and cites God before the tribunal of its own will. It is against God's law, it is a touchy sin, and cannot bear the word that reproves it. Besides, pride is the cause of all other sins, and usually that which is pursued in lust, is enjoyed in pride. It is the complacency of the soul in an earthly advantage. And consider God's judgments upon pride in parts and abilities. It once crept into heaven, then into paradise; the best hearts can have no security. Paul was apt to grow proud of his revelations; a worm may breed in manna. By strong comforts and gracious enjoyments we sometimes grow proud

and secure. We should not envy a proud person, any more than we would a man upon the gallows; they are but lifted up that they may be cast down for ever. Chrysostom says, We are apt to pity the drunkard, but envy the proud, but we had need pity them too, for they are near a fall.—God lays up the choicest mercies in the humble and lowly heart. There is excellency enough in God; he requires only sense of emptiness in us.—*Manton*.

Ver. 7—10. Submit to God, ver. 7. Christians should forsake the friendship of the world, and watch against the envy and pride which prevail in natural men, and glory in submissiveness to God. Submit yourselves to him, as subjects in duty, as friends in love and interest. Submit your understandings to the truths of God; submit your wills to the will of his precept, the will of his providence. Submit yourselves to God, for he will do you good. As the devil strives to hinder this subjection and submission to God, we ought to resist his suggestions with great care and steadiness. If he would represent yielding to the will and providence of God as exposing to contempt and misery, we must resist these suggestions of fear. If he would represent submissions to God as hindrances to outward ease, or worldly preferments, we must resist these suggestions of pride and sloth. If he would tempt us to lay any crosses, and afflictions, to the charge of Providence, or that we might avoid them, by following his directions, we must resist these provocations to anger, not fretting ourselves in any wise to do evil. Let not the devil prevail upon you; but resist him, and he will flee from you. If we basely yield to temptations, the devil will continually follow us; but if we put on the whole armour of God, and stand out against him, he will be gone from us. Resolution shuts and bolts the door against temptation.

In becoming submissive to God, we are, 1. To draw nigh to his footstool in his worship and institutions, and in every duty he requires. Draw near to God, as in Christ Jesus, and upon a mercy-seat, by believing prayer, seeking reconciliation to him; and he will draw nigh to you, to support, sanctify, comfort, and bless you. 2. Cleanse your hands; he who comes unto God, must have clean hands. St. Paul directs to lift up holy hands without wrath and doubting, 1 Tim. 2. 8, hands free from

every thing unjust or cruel; free from defilement of sin, renouncing carnal pleasure and all profit connected with it. He is not subject to God who is a servant of sin; the hands must be cleansed by faith, repentance, and reformation, or exercises of devotion will be in vain. 3. The hearts of the double-minded must be purified; those who halt between God and the world. To purify the heart, is to be sincere, and act upon this single aim and principle, rather to please God than to seek after any thing in this world. Hypocrisy is heart impurity. 4. What afflictions God sends, take as he would have you, do not despise afflictions; mourn and weep for your own sins and the sins of others, the mischief done to others, and the danger their own souls are exposed to. Times of contention and division are times to mourn in; the sins that occasion wars and fightings, should be mourned for. Let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness. The unconcerned professors St. James wrote to, are warned lest this should be their case: they are therefore directed to lay aside their vain mirth and their sensual pleasures, for godly sorrow and tears of repentance. 5. Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord; let the inward acts of the soul be suitable to the outward expressions of grief, affliction, and sorrow. Humility of spirit is required, as in the sight of Him who looks principally at the spirits of men; let there be thorough humiliation bewailing every thing evil; let there be great humility in doing what is good.

Humble yourselves, ver. 10. Our Lord himself declared, He that shall humble himself, shall be exalted, Matt. 23. 12. If truly humble under the marks of God's displeasure, we shall know the advantages of his favour; he will lift us up out of trouble, or he will lift us up, in our spirits and comforts, under trouble. He will lift us up to honour and safety in the world, or he will lift us up in our way to heaven, so as to raise our hearts and affections above the world. God will revive the spirit of the humble, Isa. 57. 15, he will hear the desire of the humble, Psa. 10. 17, and he will at last lift them up to glory. Before honour is humility. The envious, ambitious, aspiring spirit of ungodly men, is wholly opposed to the christian temper, and

the influences of the Holy Spirit; and if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. But the Lord giveth his grace to the poor in spirit.

Let sinners then submit to God, and seek his grace and favour; resisting the devil, rejecting his temptations, and he will flee from them. Let them seek God upon his mercy-seat, and show works meet for repentance. All sin must be wept over; here, in godly sorrow, or, hereafter, in eternal misery. Well then may we call on the gay, the volatile, and the triflers around us, to be afflicted, and mourn, and weep, as well as on the haughty and presumptuous to humble themselves under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt them in due time; for this is the only way to everlasting honour and happiness; nor will the Lord refuse to comfort one who really mourns for sin, or to exalt one who abases himself before him.

Ver. 11—17. Speak not evil one of another, brethren. Speak not any thing that may hurt or injure another, though it may be true, unless it is our duty and there is necessary occasion for it. Our lips must be governed by the law of kindness, as well as truth and justice: this must be a part of the character of every true christian. 1. Because ye are brethren. Christians are brethren; it is required that we be tender of the good name of our brethren. We must not take pleasure in making known the faults of others, divulging things that are secret, to expose them, nor in making more of known faults than really they deserve; and, least of all, in making false stories, and spreading evil reports as to which persons are altogether innocent. 2. Because this is to judge the law. The law of Moses says, Thou shalt not go up and down as a tale-bearer among thy people, Lev. 19. 16. The law of Christ is, Judge not, that ye be not judged, Matt. 7. 1. To break God's commandments, is, in effect, to speak evil of them, and to judge them, as if they laid too great a restraint upon us. He who quarrels with his brother, and condemns him for the sake of any thing not determined in the word of God, thereby reflects on that word of God, as if it were not a perfect rule; and He had done ill in leaving it indifferent. Let us take heed of judging the law, for the

law of the Lord is perfect; if men break the law, leave that to judge them; if they do not break it, let not us judge them. Those most ready to set up for judges of the law, generally fail most in obedience thereto.

There is one Lawgiver, who makes laws for his church and for the universe, enforces them and destroys the obstinate transgressor, and detects the hypocrite as well as saves the penitent. To him all authority and judgment belong. Who then is the poor worm, the vile sinner, forgetful of his own deserts, and daring to usurp the throne of judgment, to decide on the actions and denounce sentence against the persons of his brethren? Nothing can more fully show that the moral law is the believer's rule of duty, while it exposes the presumptuous, censorious manner in which many professors condemn those who differ from them. It is sufficient that we have the law of God, which is a rule to us all; therefore let us not presume to set up our own particular notions and opinions as a rule to all about us. There is one Lawgiver; let us leave those that set up for judges, and all others, to their own Master, remembering there is one Lawgiver who is able to save and to destroy; and let us be careful as to ourselves that we be not judged of the Lord.

Another effect of self-sufficiency, carnal-mindedness and unbelief, is reproof and exposed. "Go to now," is a call to any one to consider his conduct as being wrong. The persons reproofed were eager in pursuing worldly advantages, pleased with their plans for obtaining them, and sanguine in expecting success, but not considering the shortness and uncertainty of life, nor their entire dependence on God. See, and consider, ye that say, To-day or tomorrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain. Reflect on this way of thinking and talking. Serious reflection on our words and ways, would show us many evils we run into, and continue in. There were some who said of old, as too many say still, We will go to such a city, and do this or that, for such a time, while all serious regards to the disposals of Providence are neglected. How apt worldly and speculating men are to leave God out of their

schemes. Where any are set on earthly things, these engross the thoughts of the heart; we should therefore beware of growing eager in our pursuits after any thing here below.

How vain it is to look for any thing good without God's blessing and guidance. How could they be sure, that they should reach any of these cities? Something might stop their way, call them elsewhere, or cut the thread of life. Many who set out on journeys, go to their long home, and never reach their journeys' end. But suppose they should reach the city, how did they know they should continue there? Or, suppose they should stay the time proposed, they could not be certain they should buy and sell there; perhaps they might lie sick there, or not meet with the trade expected. Suppose they should go to that city, and continue there a year, and should buy and sell, yet they might not get gain; in this world all is uncertain. As to all these things, the frailty, shortness, and uncertainty of life, ought to check the vanity and presumptuous confidence of projects for futurity.

What is your life? It is even a vapour that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away, ver. 14. God has wisely left us in the dark concerning future events; we know not what shall be on the morrow; we know what we intend to do, but a thousand things may prevent us. We are not sure of life; it is but as a vapour, or luminous appearance, which gliding through the air appears beautiful for a moment, and then vanishes; something in appearance, but nothing solid or certain; soon scattered and gone. We can fix the hour and minute of the sun's rising and setting to-morrow, but we cannot fix the certain time of a vapour being scattered; such is our life; it appears but for a little time, and then vanishes away; it vanishes as to this world. So short, unreal, unsubstantial and fading is human life, and all the splendour, prosperity, or enjoyments that attend it; though an eternity of bliss or woe must be determined, according to our conduct during this fleeting moment.

We are to keep up constant dependence on the will of God, for life, and its actions and enjoyments, ver. 15. Ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that. Say in your

hearts at all times, and with your tongues upon proper occasions, especially in your prayers, that if the Lord will give leave, and if he will own and bless you, you have such and such designs to accomplish. This must be said, not in a slight, formal way, but so as to be reverent and serious in what we say. It is good to express ourselves thus when we have to do with others, but it is indispensably requisite that we should say this to ourselves in all that we go about. With the leave and blessing of God, was said by the heathen greeks at the beginning of every undertaking. 1. If the Lord will, we shall live. Our times are not in our own hands, but at the disposal of God; we live as long as God appoints, and in the circumstances God appoints; and 2. If the Lord will, we shall do this or that. All our actions and designs are under his control. Our heads may be filled with cares and contrivances: we may propose to do this and the other thing for ourselves, or our families, or our friends; but Providence sometimes breaks all our measures, and throws our schemes into confusion: both our counsels for action, and our conduct in action, should be entirely referred to God. All we design, and all we do, should be with submissive dependence on God.

Vain boasting is not only a weak, but a very evil thing, ver. 16. Ye rejoice in your boastings; all such rejoicing is evil. Such is the joy of worldly people, to boast of their successes; yea often to boast of their projects before they know their success. How common for men to boast of things to which they have no other title than what arises from vanity and presumption! Such rejoicing is evil; it is foolish and it is hurtful to boast of worldly things and aspiring projects, instead of attending to the humbling duties before laid down in ver. 8—10. It is a great sin, it will bring great disappointments, and will prove destruction in the end. If we rejoice in God, that our times are in his hand, that all events are at his disposal, and that he is our God in covenant, this rejoicing is good; the wisdom, power, and providence of God, will make all things work together for our good; but to rejoice in our own vain confidences and presumptuous boasts, this is an evil carefully to be avoided.

Whither is man fallen! First he practises sin, then defends it, then boasts of it! Sin is first our burden, then our custom, then our delight, then our excellency!—(92.)

To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin, ver. 17; it is aggravated sin; it is sinning with a witness; and it is to have the worst witness against a man that can be, when he sins against his own conscience. Omissions are sins which will come into judgment, as well as commissions. He that does not the good he knows should be done, as well as he who does the evil he knows should not be done, will be condemned. Let us take care that conscience be rightly informed, and faithfully and constantly obeyed; if our own hearts condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God; but if we say, We see, and act not suitably to our sight, our sin remaineth, John 9. 41.

The presumption which proceeds from knowledge is more dangerous than any other. It was the abuse of this which turned angels into devils. That person aggravates his sin who boasts that he knows his duty. The more knowledge we have, the more humble we ought to be; for we deserve the less indulgence if we transgress a known law.—(94.)

And sins of omission are aggravated by knowledge as well as sins of commission. The rule enforces duty, as well as forbids sin; and according to the knowledge of our duty, so is the obligation to perform it. O that we were more conscientious in this, and as tender of omitting prayer against light, and of neglecting to meditate and examine conscience, against light, as we are of committing the grossest outward vices against light!—(92.)

13. Going from one country to another to trade, was common among the ancient jews, and is still very usual in the east.

16. The apostle's doctrine is of general use, and at all times we must form our purposes with submission to the will of God; yet the immediate drift here was to check the security, carelessness, and carnal confidence of the jews, as to judgments then approaching, for the happiness of Jewish affairs then were running very low.—*Manton*.

CHAPTER V.

The judgments of God denounced against the rich unbelieving jews, who defrauded the poor, and lived in luxury and oppression, ver. 1—6. The Jewish believers exhorted

to patience and meekness under their tribulations, which would soon have an end, 7—11. Cautions against rash swearing, 12. Prayer recommended in afflictive, and praise in prosperous circumstances, 13. Prayer and anointing with oil for the miraculous recovery of the sick, 14, 15. Christians mutually to confess their faults and pray for each other, 16—18. The happiness of being instrumental to the conversion of a sinner, 19, 20.

Ver. 1—6. The apostle here addresses first sinners, and then saints. To sinners; the poor among the jews received the gospel, and many of them believed; but the generality of the rich rejected christianity, and were hardened in their unbelief, and hated and persecuted those who believed on Christ. To oppressing, unbelieving, persecuting, rich people, the apostle directs himself in the first six verses.

They should have such dreadful miseries come upon them, that the very apprehension was enough to make them weep and howl. Misery arising from the very things in which they placed their happiness; and misery that should be completed by these things witnessing against them to their utter destruction. And they are now called to think how they will stand before God in judgment. Go to now, ye rich men, very dreadful calamities are coming upon you, calamities that shall carry nothing of support or comfort in them, but all misery; misery in time, misery to eternity; misery in your outward afflictions, misery in your inward flame and temper of mind; misery in this world, misery in hell. You have not a single misery coming upon you, but many miseries; the ruin of your church and nation is at hand; and there will come a day of wrath when riches shall not profit any man, but all the wicked shall be destroyed.

Public calamities are most grievous to rich people, who live in pleasure, and are secure and sensual; they shall weep and howl more than others for the miseries that shall come upon them, for their misery shall arise from the things in which they placed their happiness, ver. 2. The things you now inordinately affect, will hereafter insupportably wound: they will be of no worth, of no use, but, on the contrary, will pierce you with many sorrows: for, They will witness against you, and they will eat your flesh

as it were fire, ver. 3. Ill-gotten and ill-kept treasures are said to witness against impious rich men. They think to heap up treasure, to live plentifully upon when they come to be old; but they are only heaping up treasures to become a prey to others; as the jews had all taken from them by the romans. Their treasures will prove at last to be only treasures of wrath, in the day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God. Then shall their iniquities, in the punishment of them, eat their flesh as it were with fire. All idolized treasures will soon perish, except as they will rise up in judgment against their professors, and torment them as fire, by increasing their condemnation. May the Lord deliver us from the portion of wicked rich men! let us then take care that we do not fall into their sins.

1. Covetousness is laid to the charge of this people. God gives us our worldly possessions, that we may honour him, and do good with them; but if we sinfully hoard them up, through undue affection toward them, or distrust of the providence of God for the future, this is a heinous crime, and will be witnessed against by the rust and corruption of the treasure thus heaped together.

2. Another sin is oppression, ver. 4. Those who have wealth, get power into their hands, and then are tempted to abuse that power. We here find the rich employing the poor in their labours, but having power in their hands, they made hard bargains with the poor; and, even after that, would not make good their bargain. This is an iniquity that cries so as to reach the ears of God. And, in this case, God is to be considered as the Lord of sabbath, or the Lord of hosts, a phrase often used in the Old Testament, when the people of God were defenceless, and wanted protection; and when their enemies were numerous and powerful. The Lord of hosts, who has all creatures at his disposal, and who sets all in their several places, hears the oppressed when they cry by reason of the cruelty or injustice of the oppressor, and he will avenge the wrongs done to those who are dealt with unrighteously and unmercifully. Take heed of this sin of defrauding and oppressing, avoid the very appearance of it.

3. Another sin here mentioned, is sensuality and voluptuousness, ver. 5. God

does not forbid us to use lawful pleasures; but to live in pleasure, especially sinful pleasures, as if we lived for nothing else, is a provoking sin; and to do this notwithstanding we are but strangers and pilgrims, and ought to prepare for eternity, is a grievous aggravation. Wantonness and luxury are commonly the effects of plenty and abundance; it is hard for people to have great estates, and not indulge themselves in carnal, sensual pleasures. Ye have nourished your hearts as in a day of slaughter: ye live as if every day was a day of sacrifices, a festival; and hereby your hearts are fattened and nourished to stupidity, dulness, pride, and insensibility to the wants and afflictions of others. Some may say, What harm is there in good cheer, provided people do not spend above what they have? Is it no harm for people to devote all to these, instead of abounding in acts of charity and piety? Is it no harm for people to unfit themselves for minding the concerns of their souls, by indulging the appetites of their bodies?

4. Another sin charged on the rich, was, persecution, ver. 6; Ye have condemned and killed the just, and he doth not resist you. This fills up the measure of their iniquity. They oppressed, and acted very unjustly, to get estates; when they had them, they gave way to luxury and sensuality, till they had lost all sense and feeling of the wants or afflictions of others; and then they persecuted and killed without remorse. They pretend to act legally indeed, they condemn before they kill; but unjust prosecutions, whatever colour they may carry in them, will come into the reckoning, when God shall make inquisition for blood, as well as massacres and downright murders. The just may be condemned and killed: but when such suffer by oppressors, this is marked by God, to the honour of the sufferers and the infamy of their persecutors. This commonly shows that judgments are at the door, and we may certainly conclude that a reckoning day will come, to reward the patience of the oppressed, and to break to pieces the oppressor. Above all their other crimes, the jews had condemned and crucified that Just One who had come among them, even Jesus Christ the righteous.

1—6. If, as is probable, the apostle here

points at the destruction then about to come upon the jews, and which came to pass in a manner and to an extent hitherto unparalleled, still we must consider the passage has also a general reference, and is applicable to all characters, according with the description here given. These are, as *Bloomfield* observes, the worldly nominal christians, whose minds are wholly devoted to the business and pleasures of this life. *Manton* says, he likes Calvin's judgment that these six verses are not so much an admonition as a denunciation, that the godly might be encouraged to the more patience under their oppressors.

3. From the classical writers it appears that gold and silver coins were subject to something like rust, possibly from having more alloy than those of modern times.—*Bloomfield*.

6. The address is to the rich and powerful jews who had actually condemned "the Just One," namely, Christ.—See *Middleton*.

—Or, "Is he not now drawing up his armies in array against you?" It appears from several passages in this epistle that the troubles in Judea were begun when it was written.—*Palpy*.

Ver. 7—11. After the awful warning to wealthy oppressors, the apostle addresses his poor, afflicted, and persecuted fellow christians, whom he exhorts to bear their sufferings with resignation and persevering constancy, till the coming of the Lord. The providential coming of the Lord Jesus, to execute vengeance on the jewish nation, probably is meant in the first instance, but their thoughts were also to be led forward unto the hour of death and the coming of Christ to judgment. The husbandman, when he has tilled the soil with great labour and expense, does not immediately reap the harvest. He has to wait amidst the uncertainty of the seasons, and with the renewal of his labours, till the Lord is pleased to send the rains which render the earth fruitful, and at length he is compensated by the harvest. Shall not this teach you to bear a few storms, and to be patient for a season, when you are looking for a kingdom and everlasting happiness? Consider him that waits for a crop of corn; and will not you wait for a crown of glory? If you should be called to wait longer than the husbandman, is not there something infinitely more worth waiting for? Thus believers are to wait with patient hope and persevering diligence, establishing their hearts by faith in the promises, against all temptations to draw back or turn aside. The time of their waiting would not be long. In every sense the coming of the Lord approached, and all their losses, hardships and sufferings,

would be repaid. They ought not therefore to grudge any their transient advantages, or to give way to envy or discontent, lest the coming of the Lord should be to their condemnation, instead of their redemption. The Judge even then stood as it were at the door. To him they should leave their cause, without attempting to avenge themselves, or groaning bitterly under injuries and distresses. Those who are in the midst of common enemies, and in suffering circumstances, should be especially careful not to grieve or to groan against each other.

The apostle seems to be here taxing those mutual injuries and animosities wherewith professors of those times grieved one another, and gave each other cause to groan; so that they not only sighed under the oppressions of the rich persecutors, but under injuries they sustained from brethren who, with them, professed the holy faith.—(92)

The coming of the Lord to punish the wicked jews was very nigh, when St. James wrote this epistle; and, whenever the patience and other graces of his people are tried in an extraordinary manner, the certainty of Christ's coming as Judge, and the nearness of it, should establish their hearts. The Judge is now nearer in his coming than when this was written, by above seventeen hundred years, therefore this should have the greater effect upon us.

Men count time long, because they measure it by the terms of their own duration; but God comprehends all ages in the indivisible point of his own eternity, all is as nothing to him, as a moment. To short-lived creatures, a few years may seem an age; but scripture, in its computations, measuring all things by the existence of God, reckons otherwise. We count moments long, and God, who is of an eternal duration, counts thousands of years but a small moment.—(92)

Let them study and imitate the example of the ancient prophets, who had been afflicted, and even put to death, for their faithfulness, yet had persevered with calm confidence in God, submission to his will, and meek fortitude. Those who were the greatest examples of suffering affliction, are also the best and greatest examples of patience. We count those happy who endure: we look upon righteous and patient sufferers as

the happiest people. Job also is proposed as an example for the encouragement of the afflicted, ver. 11. Job suffered a variety of very grievous miseries; but God brought about things for him, so as plainly to prove the Lord is very pitiful and of tender mercy. This had not appeared during Job's calamities, but was manifest in the event, and believers now will find the same result in their trials. The best way to bear afflictions, is, to look to the end of them; and the pity of God is such, that he will not delay bringing them to an end, when his purposes are answered. And the tender mercy of God is such, that he will make his people abundant amends for all afflictions. Let us serve our God, and endure our trials, as those who believe the end will crown all. Our eternal interests are secure if we have intrusted them to his hands, and all else is mere vanity which soon will be done with for ever.

Ver. 12—15. The sin of swearing is here condemned, ver. 12. But above all things, my brethren, swear not. It will not excuse those guilty of this sin, to say, they swear only when provoked, and before they are aware. The apostle's warning extends to all customary needless swearing, which is undoubtedly forbidden in scripture, and condemned as a grievous sin. Profane swearing was very customary among the Jews. Peter, when charged with being a disciple of Christ, to disprove the charge, cursed and swore, thinking thus most effectually to convince those who accused him that he was no disciple of Jesus. It is a sin that in later years has most scandalously prevailed, even among men who would be thought entitled to the christian name and privileges. St. James here says, Above all things, swear not; but how many are there who mind this the least of all things, and who make light of nothing so much as common profane swearing! But why above all things? Because swearing strikes directly at the honour of God, and expressly throws contempt upon his name and authority. This sin has, of all others, the least temptation to it; it brings us neither gain, nor pleasure, nor reputation, that can move men to it, but is wantonness in sinning, and needlessly showing enmity to God. Thine enemies take thy name in vain, Psa. 139. 20. This is a proof of men's being enemies

to God, however they may pretend to call themselves by his name, or sometimes to join in acts of worship. It is also a sin that is very hard to leave off when once men are accustomed to it, therefore it should especially be watched against. And once more, Above all things swear not; how can you expect the name of God should be a strong tower to you in your distress, if you profane it and trifle with it at other times? This is far from forbidding necessary and lawful oaths; it confirms them, by preserving due reverence of them.

Let it suffice christians to affirm or deny a thing as there is occasion; and always be true to their word, so as to give no occasion for being suspected of falsehood. Then they will be kept from the condemnation of rash oaths, and from profaning the name of God to justify themselves. Being suspected of falsehood leads men to swearing. Let it be known that you keep to truth, and are firm to your word, and you will find there is no need to swear to what you say. Thus shall you escape the condemnation in the third commandment; The Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.

As christians, we are to suit ourselves to the dispensations of Providence, ver. 13. In a day of affliction nothing is more seasonable than prayer. The person afflicted must pray himself, as well as engage the prayers of others. Times of affliction should be praying times. The spirit is then most humble, the heart is broken and tender; and prayer is most acceptable to God when it comes from a contrite, humble spirit. Afflictions naturally draw out complaints; and to whom should we complain but to God in prayer? It is necessary to exercise faith and hope under afflictions; and prayer is the appointed means for obtaining and increasing these graces. Is any afflicted? Let him pray.

The early christians used to sing hymns, in their worship of God. Singing psalms is a gospel ordinance, and our joy should be holy joy, consecrated to God. Holy joy is becoming in families and retirements, as well as public assemblies. Let our singing be such as to make melody with our hearts unto the Lord, and God will assuredly be pleased with this kind of devotion.

Here are particular directions as to

sick persons. It lies upon them as a duty, to send for ministers, and to desire their assistance and their prayers. It is the duty of ministers to pray with the sick, when thus desired, and called for, though the duty of visiting the sick is not confined to ministers in scripture. Let their prayers be suited to the case, and their intercessions be as becomes those affected with the calamities of others. In the times of miraculous healing, the sick person was to be anointed with oil in the name of the Lord. It is thought that this anointing with oil was only done by such as had the power of working miracles; and that when miracles ceased, this rite was laid aside. Observe here, that the saving of the sick is not ascribed to the anointing with oil, but to prayer, ver. 15. The prayer of faith shall save the sick, so that prayer over the sick must proceed from, and be accompanied with a lively faith. There must be faith, both in the person praying, and in the person prayed for. In a time of sickness it is not cold and formal prayer that is effectual, but the prayer of faith. The Lord shall raise up; that is, if God have any thing further for such a person to do in the world. Where sickness is sent as a punishment for some particular sin, that sin shall be pardoned; and in token thereof the sickness may be removed. The great thing we should beg of God for ourselves and others in the time of sickness, is, the pardon of sin. Sin is both the root of sickness and the sting of it. If sin be pardoned, afflictions will be removed in mercy, or there is mercy in their continuance. When healing is founded upon pardon, we may say, as Hezekiah, Thou hast, in love to my soul, delivered it from the pit of corruption, Isa. 38. 17. When sick and in pain, it is most common to pray and cry, Give me ease! Restore me to health! But prayer should rather and chiefly be, O that God would pardon my sins! And every thing should be avoided which gives false quiet to any who then, perhaps for the first time, think about God and their souls. Let nothing be done to encourage any to delay, under the delusive imagination that a confession, a prayer, a ministerial absolution and exhortation, and the sacrament, will set all right at last, where the duties of a godly life have been disregarded.

12. Before all things.—*Guyse*,

The true nature of an oath is, by our speech to pledge the reputation of some certain or great thing, for the averring of a doubted lesser thing, and not only, as is commonly held, an appeal to God, or other judge. As to swear by the fire, by the temple, by my faith or truth, by the life of Pharaoh, by the heavens, &c. is as much as to say, If this be not true, then the fire burneth not, the temple is not holy, I am a liar, Pharaoh is no king, as sure as heaven is heaven, &c. So, The Lord liveth, is, This is as true as that God liveth.—*Baxter*.

14, 15, 16. Niebuhr states that at some places in the east, both jews and mohammedans have their bodies anointed with oil medicinally, when they feel unwell. *Scott* considers that the anointing with oil was a symbolical action, as Mark 6. 13, and says, It cannot be supposed that these miraculous cures were performed at all times, but there seems to have been some impression on the mind of the person who wrought the miracle, and peculiar exercise of faith in Christ for the purpose.

—The mistake of the church of Rome in founding what she calls the sacrament of extreme unction, on this place, is very obvious; for the anointing here mentioned was applied to those whose recovery was expected; whereas in the romish church extreme unction is used where there is little or no hope of recovery, and is called the sacrament of the dying.

Ver. 16—20. The confession here required, is, that of christians one to another, and not to a priest. Where persons have injured one another, the acts of injustice must be confessed to those against whom they have been committed. Where persons have tempted one another to sin, or have consented in the same evil actions, they ought to excite each other to repentance. Where crimes have done public mischief, they ought to be publicly confessed, so as may best reach all who are concerned. St. James puts us upon telling what we are conscious is amiss in ourselves, or in one another, so far as confession is necessary to our reconciliation with such as are at variance with us, or for reparation of wrongs done to any, or for gaining information in any point of conscience. Sometimes also it may be of good use to christians, to disclose their weaknesses and infirmities to one another, where they may help each other by prayer to obtain pardon of their sins, and power against them. Those who make confession of their faults one to another, should pray with and for one another. Mutual acknowledgment of faults will tend greatly to peace and brotherly love.

The great advantage and efficacy of prayer is declared and proved; the

effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much, whether he pray for himself or for others: witness the example of Elias, ver. 17, 18. He who prays, must be a righteous man; not loving or approving of any known iniquity. If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear my prayer, Psa. 66. 18. Further, the prayer itself must be a fervent prayer. It must be a pouring out of the heart to God; and it must proceed from unfeigned faith. Such prayer avails much. It is of great advantage to ourselves, it may be very beneficial to our friends, and we are assured of its being acceptable to God. It is good having those for friends, whose prayers avail in the sight of God. When a righteous person, a true believer, justified in Christ, and by his grace walking before God in holy obedience, presents an effectual fervent prayer, one wrought in his heart by the energy of the Holy Spirit, exciting holy affections and believing expectations, and so leading earnestly to plead the promises of God at his mercy-seat, it avails much.

The power of prayer is here proved from the success of Elijah. He was a zealous good man and a very great man, but he had infirmities. In prayer we must not look to the merit of man, but to the grace of God. It is not enough to say a prayer, but we must pray in prayer. Thoughts must be fixed, desires firm and ardent, and graces in exercise; when we thus pray in prayer, we shall speed in prayer. Elijah prayed that it might not rain; and God heard him in his pleading against an idolatrous persecuting country. Again he prayed, and the heaven gave rain. This instance of the extraordinary efficacy of prayer, is recorded to encourage even ordinary christians to be instant and earnest in prayer. God never says to any of the seed of Jacob, seek my face in vain. Where there may not be so much of miracle in God's answering our prayers, yet there may be as much of grace.

This epistle concludes with an exhortation to do all we can to further and promote the conversion and salvation of others, ver. 19, 20. If any err, and one, whosoever he may be, convert him, he is therein an instrument of saving a soul from death. It is no mark of a wise or holy man, to boast of his being free from error, or to refuse to acknowledge

when in an error. But if any do err, be they ever so great, be not afraid to show them their error; and be they ever so weak and little, disdain not to make them wiser and better. If they err from the truth, that is, from the gospel, the great rule and standard of truth, whether in opinion or practice, endeavour to bring them again to the rule. Errors in judgment and in life generally go together. There is doctrinal mistake at the bottom of every practical mistake. There is no one habitually bad, but upon some bad principle. We are not to accuse and exclaim against an erring brother, and seek to bring reproaches and calamities upon him, but to convert him; and if by all our endeavours we cannot do this, yet we are no where empowered to persecute and destroy him. If we are instrumental in the conversion of any, we are said to convert them, though this be the work of God. And if we can do no more toward the conversion of sinners, yet we may pray for the grace and Spirit of God to convert and change them. This is conversion, to turn a sinner from the error of his ways, not merely to turn him from one party to another, or from one notion and way of thinking to another. There is a soul in the case; and what is done toward the salvation of a soul, shall certainly turn to good account. By such conversion of heart and life a multitude of sins shall be hid. Though our sins are many, even a multitude, they may be hid or pardoned. Let people cover or excuse their sin as they will, there is no way effectually and finally to hide it, but forsaking it. Conversion shall prevent a multitude of sins; many sins are prevented in the party converted; many also may be prevented in others whom he may influence, or may converse with.

As there is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, true christians cannot want inducements to animate them in attempting so blessed a work; nor can those need any of their own works to cover the multitude of their sins, who know the all-sufficiency of Christ's atoning blood. The apostle shows that this was a far more important work than healing the sick, though they might be led to covet miraculous powers, and neglect a much more

charitable work. Especially, in the use of all proper means, every believer should seek the spiritual good of children, relatives, and all around them, even their enemies. The salvation of one soul is of infinitely greater importance than the preservation of the lives of multitudes, or promoting the outward welfare of a whole people. Let us in our several stations keep these things in mind, sparing no pains in such a service, and the event will prove that our labour is not in vain in the Lord.

For six thousand years God has been multiplying pardons, and yet his free grace is not tired nor grown weary! There is no want of mercy in the creditor, nor of sufficiency in the Surety. It is a folly to think that an emperor's revenue will not pay a beggar's debt. Christ has undertaken to satisfy, and he has enough wherewith to pay. We are of limited dispositions, and therefore straiten the abundance of grace in our thoughts; but God is not as man. The master can forgive talents, when the servant would not forgive pence. Certainly Divine mercy is an ocean that is ever full and ever flowing; may the Lord interest us in this abundant mercy, through the blood of Christ, and the sanctification of the Spirit.—(92)

16. The popish system of auricular confession to a priest, is attempted to be supported by ver. 16, and 1 John 1. 9, but neither of those passages has any reference whatever to the ministerial office. In the former, confession of our faults is represented as the duty of the faithful to each other, and in the latter as the duty of the penitent to God alone.—*T. H. Horne*.

20. Save, that is, be an instrument of his salvation. Words proper to the Supreme Cause are often ascribed to the instrument, as Rom. 10. 14, 1 Tim. 4. 16. And he shall be a means of hiding the sins of an erring brother. It implies the act of justification, so expressed, Psal. 32. 1, and the sins of the converted person are meant, which we are said to cover, when, as instruments, by our admonitions, we reclaim the erroneous person and bring him to repentance, and to seek pardon.—*Manton*.

ST. JAMES AND ST. PAUL.

The passage, James 2. 14—26, is often quoted by some who are directly opposed to the scriptural doctrine of justification by faith, and by others who endeavour from hence to support views which involve a mixed justification. The best course in reference to the present work appears to be, to give, in addition to the notes on the passage itself, some extracts from writers who have considered the apparent discrepancy.

It is unnecessary to use many arguments, to prove the consistency of the doctrine of James with that of Paul. St. Paul evidently meant,

that faith alone interested a sinner in the mercy of God, through the redemption and righteousness of Christ, for justification; but the faith of which he spoke wrought by love, constraining to obedience, and was connected with a new creation unto holiness. St. James meant, that no faith, which was not productive of good works, could justify a man before God: that a speculative assent or an indolent reliance, separate from repentance, diligence in the use of appointed means, and holy obedience, "was dead" and unprofitable; and that consequently, there was a sound sense, in which a man might be said to be justified by his works, and in perfect consistency with "his faith being imputed to him for righteousness;" as in the case of Abiahah. But St. Paul opposed those who *objected* to the doctrine of justification by faith, and St. James in this place wrote against those who *perverted* it.—*T. Scott*.

There is no opposition at all between the two apostles. For St. Paul only excludes works from being the way and means of our justification, and St. James only excludes that faith which is without works.—St. Paul's scope is, to show by what we are justified; and that, he tells us, is by faith. St. James' scope is, to show what kind of faith that is which must justify us; not an empty, vain, fantastical faith, but such as is operative, and productive of good works. His intent is not to exclude faith from our justification, no, nor so much as to join works with it in partnership and commission: for, ver. 23, he tells us the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed to him for righteousness, the very place St. Paul (Rom. 4. 3, Gal 3. 6,) makes use of to prove justification by faith, and therefore, when he saith, a man is justified by works, he contends for nothing else than a *working faith*. St. Paul and St. James fully accorded about this doctrine of justification by faith. St. Paul affirms that it is faith alone which justifies; St. James denies that a lonely faith can justify; and we assent to both as true; for the faith, which alone justifies us, is not a lonely or solitary faith, but accompanied and attended by good works.—*Bp. Hopkins*.

Schulefeld quotes the preceding passage, and exposes the frequent error of representing the two apostles as speaking of two distinct things by the term of justification, used as common to both; either an *essential* and a *declaratory* justification; or a *first* and a *final* justification. Had this been the right solution of the difficulty, the apostle St. James surely would have taken a more direct method of explaining it. *Schulefeld* observes that the two inspired writers differ, not as to the meaning of the word "faith," by which both intend a simple belief and assent in the Lord Jesus Christ, as the one and only ground of a sinner's acceptance with God, but it is manifest they differ entirely in their *object*. "The object of St. Paul is to point out the way of justification; and this is by faith, without the deeds of the law. St. James, writing to those who held the truth, but held it in unrighteousness, has no occasion to press the point of justification by faith as the only way of acceptance—for, on this point, he and his opponents are agreed—but his object is to show them that the faith in which they trusted, was the mere name, and profession, and shadow, of faith; he tells them they cannot be justified, except by a true

and lively and operative faith, by a faith really existing in the heart, and evidencing itself in the life." See *Scholfield's two Sermons before the University of Cambridge*, in which this subject is expressly considered.

Gill says, It is clear that the apostle is not speaking of true faith, for that is not without works in persons capable of performing them. It is an operative grace. It works by love and kindness, both to Christ and to his members. But he speaks of a profession of faith, a mere historical one, by which a man, at most, assents to the truth of things, and only says he has faith, but has it not. "Can faith save him?" such a faith as this, a mere profession of faith, which lies only in words, and has no deeds to show the truth and genuineness of it. True faith indeed has no casual influence on salvation, nor any virtue and efficacy in itself to save. Christ, the object of faith, is the only Cause and Author of salvation; faith is only that grace which receives a justifying righteousness, the pardon of sin, adoption, and a right to the heavenly inheritance. It does not justify, nor pardon, nor adopt, nor give the right to the inheritance, but lays hold on, and claims these, by virtue of the gift of grace: and it has spiritual and eternal salvation inseparably connected with it; but, as for the other faith, a man may have it, and be in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity—Though works may deceive, and do not infallibly prove the truth of faith, yet it is certain, that where they are not, but persons live in a continued course of sinning, there cannot be true faith—Yet good works are no other than what it is a man's duty to perform, and therefore cannot justify from sin which he has committed.

O'Brien enters very fully into the subject in his sermons upon the nature and effects of faith. He urges that even if the doctrines of the two apostles could be shown to be contradictory, yet in reference to a single statement, brought forward against a principle collected from such various declarations of holy writ, it would be best to say, that some cause prevents us from penetrating into the real sense of the passage, and that it may be left, as some others in the Bible, till God shall please to manifest what he now sees fit to conceal. But this is not necessary, if we first fix the circumstances under which St. James was speaking, and then make a legitimate use of these circumstances in determining the force of what he has said.

It would not be fair to the very able manner in which this writer has stated his arguments, that a few detached sentences should be given as adequately conveying his meaning, but more cannot be extracted in a mere note like the present, and the reader will not regret if he is induced to peruse the whole statement of *O'Brien* and that of *Scholfield* already noticed.

O'Brien says, It appears easy to show that the persons with whom St. James had to do, were in error in supposing that they possessed the principle of faith, that they were in error with respect to the true nature of that principle, and, in consequence, in error with respect to the true meaning of the doctrine they were abusing. That they were destitute of the principle is abundantly evident. No language can more distinctly convey a false pretence to an efficacious principle than the words of the apostle—"What profiteth it, if a man say that he has faith;" even if what follows, "and have not

works," did not afford a proof to all who know the truth, that the pretence was a false one. St. James addresses himself to the correction of these errors in the practical way, common in the Bible, not by laying down formally the exact doctrine on the subject, but by instances showing the true nature of justifying faith, and the true nature of justification by faith, so far as was necessary to correct this gross error on the subject. And he throughout, as is common in the Bible, uses the language of those whose errors he was combating—calls the principle which they called "faith," by the same name; and adopts their language concerning justification by faith, without a formal exposure of their misuse of terms. Read all that he says, remarking that he employs throughout, the language of those whose errors he is seeking to remove, using "faith" to express their notion of it, not the true one; and in the same way, suffering "justification by faith" to stand for their false view of it. Remark this, and there is nothing which might not be expected from St. Paul, under the same circumstances.

O'Brien notices the medley of inconsistent objections with which the doctrine of justification by faith has been attacked. As these objections come from extremes which seldom unite, except when this doctrine is to be weakened or assailed, they in fact confirm it. And as to the old and common objection, that this doctrine weakens or removes moral restraint, he shows that "we do not make void the law through faith, but establish the law; that justification by faith supplies motives to obedience, which no legal system can supply, that it calls into exercise, develops, and perfects principles over which law did not exert any power; that while it ensures to all to whom it gives the spirit of adoption, an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeeth not away, eternal in the heavens, it is exercising upon them a moral agency, which is fitting them to enjoy it; and that it is the great instrument in the hands of the Spirit of God to effect the renovation of our fallen nature, which if it be not the only intelligible end of revelation, is doubtless, with respect to us, its highest and most important end."

In reference to this subject, *O'Brien* enters into a full explanation of the meaning of the original words in the New Testament, usually translated "to believe" and "faith." The word, "to believe," is used in the greek version of the Old Testament to represent a hebrew word, which expresses both to trust and believe, and as to which of these two meanings it bears in any particular place, that is best determined by the sense of each passage. The word πιστεύω, in classical greek, bore the sense "to trust" as well as "to believe," and in the New Testament also; the different passages show which sense it bears in them. And by a series of observations, indicating very careful research, *O'Brien* advances to the conclusion, that there appear to be traces of a purpose in the writers of the New Testament, to preserve a phrase of common occurrence (in which this verb or noun is, as it is in the original, followed by a dative, or accusative with a preposition) to express this particular state of mind—the confidence in God or Christ, by which we are reconciled to God, or which reconciled sinners feel; for when confidence in any created person or thing is to be expressed, or confidence in God for something else, the phrase is usually varied.

With respect to the greek noun *πίστις*, he says, it is never used, as far as he knows, to express belief simply, unless 2 Thess. 2. 13 is esteemed an instance. It always expresses real faith, unless James 2. 14, as above explained, is considered to intimate the contrary.

This note may be closed with the following remarks on the subject, perhaps more suited to the general reader, than those already given.

In this passage from St. James, a challenge is given to the fruitless professor on the one hand, to show his faith without his works, and the believer is supposed to make an offer on the other, to demonstrate his own, by manifest and irrefragable evidence. "Show me thy faith without thy works;" that is, "You profess to have fled for refuge to lay hold on the prize set before sinners in Jesus Christ: it is well! But you are absolutely destitute of any works of obedience to him, perhaps you own it, even boast it! In what way then can you prove your faith? You believe there is a God; but your actions say, 'there is no God!' You believe there is a Saviour; but you crucify him afresh, and put him to an open shame! You profess to have received the greatest proof of love from him, and yet you allow yourself to practise those things which his 'soul abhors,' and his word forbids! while you neglect every thing in which his nature delights, and his law enjoins! How will you show your faith? By profession? The glowing lips of profession, with the wicked heart indulging in sin, are as a 'potsdred covered with silver dross!' But argument on such a subject is superfluous; the apostle evidently holds it up as a palpable absurdity, as a thing convicting itself! Reason, nature, common sense, and common feeling, are so at

variance with the idea, that to mention it is to confute it; and, in point of fact, the attempt has never been made by any religion, however false and wicked, to establish any mode of faith without demonstrating also, in some respects, its practical good tendency. It never was made, till Satan attempted to pervert the most holy and important doctrine of the gospel, in the way opposed by St. James. It was reserved for the antinomian to outstrip the heathen himself, in folly, blasphemy, and wickedness! But the believer meets him. He says, "I will show thee my faith by my works. You may call it legal; but I can prove the contrary. Under the influence of the Holy Spirit, I have discovered, and I have felt, that by the deeds of the law I could not be justified. I was a lost sinner; but the grace of God, which bringeth salvation, hath appeared to me in the person and work of my Saviour Jesus Christ, as revealed in the gospel. I have fled to that refuge; my heart embraces Him: he is the anchor of my soul, and I am justified, though I have not fulfilled the demands of the law. What then? shall I continue in sin that grace may abound? Nay, God forbid! His grace has taught me a better lesson. It teaches me that denying ungodliness and worldly lust, I should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world. It causes me to love God, and love the brethren—it overcomes the world—and I will show it by my actions. It will be seen that I believe in Christ, when it is manifest that I have forsaken the world and sin, for his name's sake: that I endure temptation in seeing Him that is invisible, and that I show my love to him by what I do."—*J. Bull.*

THE FIRST GENERAL EPISTLE OF PETER.

THE history of Peter is very prominent in the sacred records, and need not be recapitulated here; the additional particulars, recorded in ecclesiastical history, have been noticed in another part of this work. The genuineness and authority of this epistle have never been disputed, and it is quoted by the earliest uninspired christian writers. It appears to be addressed to dispersed, afflicted, Hebrew christians, and to have been written about A.D. 64, either from Babylon or Rome, (see note ch. 5. 12.) during a period of calamity and persecution.

T. H. Horne divides this epistle into four sections, besides the introduction and conclusion.

1. An exhortation to Jewish christians, to persevere steadfastly in the faith with all patience and cheerfulness, and to maintain a holy conversation, notwithstanding their sufferings and persecutions. This is enforced by considering the peculiar blessings and privileges freely bestowed on them, ch. 1. 3—2. 10.

2. Includes exhortations to a holy conversation in general, ch. 2. 11, 12. And to the faithful discharge of their duties as subjects to their rulers, ver. 13—17, servants to their masters, ver. 18—25, and husbands to their wives, ch. 3. 1—13.

3. Patience, submission, and holiness of life are enforced, by considering the example of Christ, ch. 3. 14—18, by the punishment of the disobedient as in the days of Noah, ver. 19—22, by the example of Christ, by the conversion of believers become dead to the flesh, ch. 4. 1—6, by the approaching destruction of the Jewish state, ver. 7—11, and by the consideration that under the gospel, afflictions are the portion of the believer, and matter of joy, ver. 12—19.

4. Ministers and people are directed respecting their mutual behaviour, ch. 5. 1—11.

This epistle is written with great force and majesty, and its contents evidently show their Divine origin. Every part indicates a mind that felt the power of the doctrines he delivered, and a soul that glowed with zeal for the spread of the gospel. We here find the same great doctrines, with which St. Paul's epistles are replete, applied to the same practical purposes. And it is peculiarly remarkable for the sweetness, gentleness, and humble love, with which it is written; which form a striking contrast to the domineering pride and severity that characterize the pretended successors of this sacred writer.

This excellent epistle, says *Leighton*, is a brief, and yet a very clear summary, both of the consolations and the instructions needful for the encouragement and direction of a christian in

his journey to heaven, elevating his thoughts and desires to that happiness, and strengthening him against all opposition in the way, both that of corruption within, and temptations and afflictions from without. The heads of doctrine contained in it are many, but the main that are most insisted on, are these three, faith, obedience, and patience; to establish the christians in believing, to direct them in doing, and to comfort them in suffering, often setting before those to whom he wrote, the matchless example of the Lord Jesus, and the greatness of their engagement to follow him.

CHAPTER I.

The apostle salutes the professing believers to whom he wrote; and blesses God for his special benefits to them through Jesus Christ, ver. 1-5. in which they rejoiced under all tribulations, 6-9. Salvation by Christ was foretold in ancient prophecy, 10-12. All are exhorted to holy conversation, suitable to their principles, privileges, and obligations, 13-25.

Ver. 1-5. As christians are strangers and pilgrims upon earth, we may understand this epistle as addressed to believers in general, who are strangers in every city or country where they live and scattered through the nations. These are addressed as the elect, chosen in Christ, according to the fore-knowledge of God. This eternal purpose, and special love of God the Father, had been rendered effectual as was designed, through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience, which was begun by their regeneration, and carried on in the continued mortification of their sinful nature, and the progressive renewal of their souls to the holy image of God. This was accompanied by the continual application of the virtue of Christ's atonement to the conscience, by Divine faith, for the removal of their guilt, and the rendering their persons and services accepted with God. Here is allusion to the typical sprinkling of blood under the law. The blood of the sacrifices must not only be shed, but sprinkled, to denote that the benefits designed thereby, are applied and imputed to the offerers. To these persons the apostle prayed that grace and peace might be multiplied. Thus they were taught to ascribe their salvation to the electing love of the Father, the redemption of the Son, and the sanctification of the Holy Ghost; and so to give glory to one God in three Persons, into whose name they had been baptized.

Those who possess spiritual blessings in their own souls, earnestly desire the communication of the same to others.

A true christian's condition is never so bad but he has great reason to bless God. As a sinner has always reason to mourn, notwithstanding his present prosperity, so believers, in the midst of their manifold difficulties, have reason still to rejoice and bless God. And thus the apostle calls on his fellow-christians, to join with him in blessing God for his distinguishing mercy and grace, who, as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, out of the greatness of his compassion had regenerated them; and wrought in them by the Divine power, all their repentance, faith, and obedience.

Hope, in the world's phrase, has reference only to an uncertain good, for their hope is conversant with uncertain things, or after an uncertain manner in things that are certain. All worldly hopes are tottering, built upon sand, and the worldling's hopes of heaven are but blind and groundless conjectures; but the hope of the sons of the living God is a living hope, and not only as to its object, but to its effect also. It enlivens and comforts in all distresses, enables to encounter and surmount all difficulties. And it cannot fail, it dies not before accomplishment. It is a living hope, living in death itself. Death which cuts off all other hopes, fulfils this hope and ends it in enjoyment. Mercy is the spring of all this; yea, great mercy and manifold mercy.—(38.)

And this well-grounded hope of salvation, is an active and living principle of obedience in the soul of the believer. This regeneration, and the hope resulting from it, are effects of the resurrection of Christ, which prove that his sacrifice has been accepted, and that he communicated, through his intercession, the gift of the Holy Spirit, whereby sinners are raised up to newness of life.

It shows that he is victorious over death, the grave, and all our spiritual enemies; and it is also an assurance of our own resurrection. There being inse-

parable union between Christ and his flock, they rise by virtue of his resurrection as their Head, Col. 3. 1. The matter of a christian's joy, is the remembrance of the happiness laid up for him under the name of inheritance, ver. 4. It is described by the excellency of its nature. It is *incorruptible*, it perishes not, it cannot come to nothing, it is an estate that cannot be spent. Then *undrilled*, not stained with the least spot; this signifies its purity and perfection. And it *fadeth not*, it does not fade or wither at all, is not sometimes more or less pleasant, but ever the same, still like itself. As it is incorruptible, it excels all earthly possessions. We cannot say what it is, but it is unspeakably above all the most excellent things of the inferior world and the present life. We must describe it by privatives, by removing imperfections from it. All possessions here are defiled and stained with defects and failings; still something is wanting; fair houses, but sad cares flying about the gilded and ceiled roofs, soft beds and full tables, but sick bodies and uneasy stomachs. All possessions are stained with sin, either in acquiring or using them. Foul hands pollute all they touch; our sin defiles what we possess; it is sin that burdens the creation. The greater part of our intercourse is nothing but an interchange of sin and vanity. How ready are we to turn the things we possess into occasions and instruments of sin, and to think there is no liberty or delight in their use, without abusing them! Who can bear preferment without pride, riches without covetousness, ease without wantonness? Are not all earthly things defiled inheritances? Another disadvantage of worldly possessions is, that they are more uncertain and inconstant than the flowers and plants of the field. The original phrase alludes to the decaying of plants and flowers, but the excellency of this inheritance is, that it falls not under the stroke of time, comes not within the compass of its scythe. There is nothing in it tending to corruption; no spot of sin or sorrow there; all pollution wiped away and all tears with it; no envy or strife. No change, no summer and winter, not like the poor comforts here, but a bliss always flourishing. Sweet visits from God the saints sometimes have, but they

are short and often interrupted; there, no cloud shall come betwixt them and their Sun. As there shall be no change in what they behold, so no weariness nor abatement of their delight in beholding. Reserved in heaven for you. That must be of the greatest worth that is laid up in the highest, and best place—in heaven, where nothing impure enters, much less is laid up and kept. If these things were believed, they would persuade. Have we not experience of the vanity and misery of corruptible things? Is it not time to consider whether we are provided with any thing surer and better than what we have here—whether we have a home to go to after our wanderings? Happy they whose hearts the Holy Spirit sets on this inheritance.—(89.)

God not only gives his people grace, but preserves them unto glory: their being kept, implies both danger and deliverance; they may be attacked, but shall not be overcome, ver. 5. The number of enemies and our own infirmities are such, that no power but what is almighty can preserve the soul through all unto salvation, 2 Cor. 12. 9; Rom. 14. 4. Here is God's power, and man's faith, which implies an earnest desire of salvation, reliance upon Christ, vigilant care to do God's will, and persevering diligence in prayer; by such a patient, operating, conquering faith, we are kept, by Divine grace, unto salvation. Life and immortality are now brought to light by the gospel, but this life will be revealed more gloriously, when the soul shall be admitted into the presence of Christ, and behold his glory.

Ver. 6—9. Every believer has always something wherein he may greatly rejoice; it should show itself in the countenance and conduct. His joy arises from his treasure, which consists of matters of great value, and the title to them is sure. Those who have reason greatly to rejoice, may yet be in great heaviness. All sorts of adversities are temptations, or trials of faith, patience, and constancy; the effect is great heaviness. But the afflictions and sorrows of believers are only for a little while. And heaviness is often necessary to the christians' good, and for the glory of God, otherwise he would no more appoint such trials, than a kind and wise father would needlessly afflict his beloved child, or a

physician would prescribe painful remedies without occasion. The Lord does not willingly afflict, yet his wise love often appoints sharp trials, to show his people their hearts, and to do them good at the latter end.

The trial of faith is more precious than the trial of gold; in both there is purification, separation of the dross, and discovery of soundness and goodness. But gold does not increase and multiply by trial in the fire, it becomes less; while faith is established, improved, and multiplied, by oppositions and afflictions; gold must perish at last, and can only purchase perishing things, while the trial of faith will be found to praise, and honour, and glory. Honour is properly that esteem and value which one has with another, and so God and man will honour the saints. Praise is the expression or declaration of that esteem; so Christ will commend his people in the great day. Glory is the lustre wherewith a person, so honoured and praised, shines in heaven. If we make our estimate, either from present use, or the final event, it will be found true that faith is infinitely more precious than gold; Christ will appear again in glory, and, when he does so, the saints will appear illustrious, and their graces will appear with him. Let this reconcile to present afflictions; they work for the believer a far more exceeding and an eternal weight of glory.

The faith of a christian assures us of abundance of particulars that reason could never have found. True christians love Jesus, because they believe in him. This love discovers itself in high esteem for him, cheerful services and sufferings. Where there are true faith and love to Christ, there is, or may be, joy unspeakable and full of glory; this joy cannot be described by words.

Many directions as to attaining the love of Christ might be offered, but surely this will comprehend the most, if not all. Believe, and you shall love; believe much, and you shall love much. Labour for strong and deep persuasions of the glorious things spoken of Christ, and this will command love. Did men indeed believe his worth, they would accordingly love him. Oh this mischievous unbelief which makes the heart cold and dead towards God! Seek then to believe Christ's excellency in himself,

and his love to us, and our interest in him, and this will kindle such a fire in the heart as will make it ascend in a sacrifice of love to him. For, that we may rejoice in Christ, we must find him ours; otherwise the more excellent he is, the more cause has the heart to be sad while it has no portion in him.—(88.)

These believers had the beginnings of heaven in the possession of holiness and a heavenly mind; in their duties and communion with God, in the earnest of the inheritance, and the witness of the Divine Spirit. They were on the losing side as to the world, but if they lost an inferior good, they were receiving the salvation of their souls. The glory of God and our own happiness are so connected, that if we sincerely seek the one we shall attain the other.

Salvation denotes full deliverance from all kinds of misery, and the safe possession of perfect happiness, when the soul shall no more be subjected to the evils which are its own, nor those which it endures from its union with the body. The certainty of this hope is as if believers had already received it. Sooner may the rivers run backward, and the course of the heavens change, and the frame of nature be dissolved, than any one soul united to Christ Jesus by faith and love, can be severed from him, and so fall short of the salvation hoped for in him; and this is the matter of their rejoicing. And you cannot see and know his goodness but by tasting it; and having tasted it, all the poor joys of earth, thought sweet before, become litter and distasteful.—(88.)

2. True sanctification is a certain fruit of election. As by the election of God, the heirs of salvation are distinguished from others in God himself, or in his intention and counsel, so also by regeneration and sanctification are they distinguished from others in themselves. To sanctify, according to the general signification of the word, is to set apart to some use.—*Ames.*

—The free election of God is the efficient cause of our salvation; the material cause is Christ's obedience, our effectual calling is the formal cause; and the final cause is our sanctification.—*Bishop's Bible.*

5. The original word for "kept" is very emphatical, and signifies being kept as in an impregnable garrison, secure from harm, under the observation of an all-seeing eye, and the protection of an almighty hand.—*Doddridge.*

8. 9. The affliction here demanded for Christ, is not founded upon a personal intercourse with him. The absence of strong encomiums on the most eminent human instruments of Divine beneficence to the world, is a remarkable characteristic of the inspired writings. And in

this passage the unmeasured character of the affection described, and the reason of the joy, the salvation of the soul, carry it infinitely out of the range of a rational application to any created nature.—*J. P. Smith.*

Ver. 10—12. The persons to whom the apostle wrote had profound veneration for the Old Testament. The object of their search was salvation, the grace that should come to them from Him who was sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. They inquired and searched diligently; as miners, who break through not only the earth, but the rock, to come to the ore, so these holy prophets were diligent in their inquiries after the grace of God, to be revealed in the days of the Messiah. Their being inspired did not make their industrious search needless. Even their own revelation required their study, meditation, and prayer.

The works here ascribed to the Holy Ghost prove him to be God; he did signify, discover, and manifest many hundred years beforehand, the sufferings of Christ, with particular circumstances attending them; by inspiring the prophets to reveal it, and by enabling the faithful to believe it. Jesus Christ was the main subject of the prophets' studies. The sufferings of Christ, and the glories that should follow; this inquiry would lead to a view of the whole gospel, the sum whereof is this—That Christ Jesus was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification. Their minds were set upon the time of its accomplishment, so far as the Spirit of Christ, which was in them, had signified. From the example of Christ Jesus we must expect a time of services and sufferings, before we are received to glory: it was so with him, and the disciple is not above his Lord; the suffering time is but short, but the glory is everlasting; let the suffering season be ever so sharp and severe, it shall not hinder, but work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

The prophets' holy endeavours were not slighted, for God gave them satisfactory revelations these things should not come to pass in their time, but in the times of the apostles, who must report them, under the infallible direction of the Holy Ghost, to all the world. God is pleased to answer our necessities rather than our requests. But the revelations of God to his church, though

gradual, are all perfectly consistent. The doctrine of the prophets, and that of the apostles, exactly agree, as coming from the same Spirit of God. The gospel is the ministration of the Spirit; its success depends upon his operation and blessing; while the mysteries of the gospel, and the methods of man's salvation are so glorious, that the blessed angels consider the whole scheme of man's redemption with deep attention and admiration, as eclipsing all former displays of the harmonious perfections of their God. And shall not we then search diligently those scriptures which contain the doctrines of salvation? Let us use every method for bringing our minds to attend unto this great concern, and to do the work of our Master with alacrity and industry.

Ver. 13—16. Let all so distinguished, gird up the loins of their minds. You have a journey to go, a race to run, a warfare to accomplish, and a great work to do. As the traveller, the racer, the warrior, and the labourer, gathered in their long and loose garments, that they might be ready in their business, so do you by your minds and affections. Gather them in, restrain their extravagances, and let the strength and vigour of your minds be exerted in your duty, cordially choosing and loving, and cheerfully obeying the word of the gospel. Be sober, be vigilant against all spiritual dangers and enemies, and be temperate in recreation, business, and all behaviour; be sober-minded in opinion, as well as in practice, and humble in your judgment of yourselves. And hope perfectly, trust, without doubting, in that grace now offered by the gospel. A strong and perfect trust in the grace of God is very consistent with our best endeavours in our duty; we must hope perfectly. yet gird up our loins, and address ourselves vigorously to the work we have to do, encouraging ourselves from the grace of Jesus Christ.

The children of God ought to prove themselves such by their obedience to God. The best of them have had their times of lust and ignorance; the time has been, when the scheme of their lives, their way and fashion, was, to accommodate and gratify earthly desires and appetites, being ignorant of God and themselves, of Christ and the gospel.

But when converted, they are people of another fashion and manner from what they were before; their inward frame, speech, and conduct are wholly changed from what they were in times past.

Holiness is the desire and duty of every christian. It must be universal; in all affairs, in every condition, towards all people. We must especially watch and pray against the sins to which we are inclined. As God is holy: we must imitate him, though we can never equal him. He is perfectly, unchangeably, and eternally holy; and the consideration of the holiness of God should oblige us to the highest degrees of holiness we can attain unto. The written word of God is the surest rule of a christian's life, and by this rule we are commanded to be holy every way. For He sanctifies those whom he saves.

There are unquestionably among those who profess themselves the people of God, some who are indeed his children, and bear his image both in their hearts and in their lives. This impression of holiness is on their souls and conversation; but with the most, a name and form of godliness are all they have for religion. Alas, we speak of holiness, we hear of it, and it may be, we commend it, but we act it not. Or, if we do, it is but a personated acting, as on a stage in the sight of men; not as in the sight of our holy God, lodging it in our hearts, and thence diffusing it into all our actions. And it is no matter, though the profane world mock and revile. It is thy honour to be, as David said, 2 Sam. 6. 22, thus more vile, in growing still more like to him in holiness. What need that the godly should be put out of countenance, because the world looks on holiness as singularity? it is after the pattern of the King of kings. As it raises our endeavours high to look on the highest pattern, so it will lay our thoughts low concerning ourselves. Consider the infinite holiness of God, and this will lay us in the dust.—(88.)

Ver. 17—21. Holy confidence in God as a Father, and awful fear of him as a Judge, are consistent; to regard God habitually as a Judge, endears him to us as a Father. And the judgment of God will be without respect of persons, according to every man's work. Faith, holiness, and obedience are required of

us, and our works evidence whether we have complied with our obligations. If believers do evil, surely God will visit them with corrections. Then, let christians not doubt God's faithfulness to his promises, nor give way to enslaving dread of his wrath, but being watchful lest they dishonour God and incur his rebukes, lest they fall into temptation and disgrace their profession, let them unite confidence in the Lord's mercy with reverence of his holiness and authority. The fearless professor is defenceless, and Satan takes him captive at his will; the desponding professor has no heart to avail himself of his advantages, and is easily induced to surrender.

They were redeemed, or brought back again, by a ransom paid to the Father. And the price paid for their redemption was not corruptible things, as silver and gold, but the precious blood of Christ. They knew this. Also from what they were redeemed; from a vain conversation received by tradition. The consideration of our redemption ought to be a constant and powerful inducement to holiness and the fear of God. Silver and gold, and things of this world, often are snares, temptations, and hinderances to salvation, but they can by no means purchase or procure it. The redemption of man is real, we are bought with a price, and the price is equal to the purchase, for it is the precious blood of Christ, a Person without blemish and without spot, whom the paschal lamb represented, and an infinite Person, being the Son of God, one with the Father, Acts 20. 28.

And the design of Christ in shedding his most precious blood, was, to redeem us, not only from eternal misery hereafter, but from a vain conversation in this world. That conversation is vain, which is empty, frivolous, trifling, and unserviceable to the honour of God, the credit of religion, the conviction of unbelievers, and the comfort and satisfaction of a man's own conscience. Not only openly wicked, but unprofitable conversation is highly dangerous, though it may plead antiquity and custom in its defence; nor is it wise to resolve, I will live and die in such a way, because my forefathers did so. The jews rested in legal ceremonies and traditions, the gentiles in idolatries and fables; both were far from spiritual

religion, and both were under condemnation as guilty sinners.

The Redeemer is further described, as one fore-ordained before the foundation of the world, but he was manifested to be that Redeemer by his birth, by his Father's testimony, and his own works, especially his resurrection from the dead, Rom. 1. 4; when he was invested with all power in heaven and earth, and glorified with that glory which he had with God, before the world was. The redeemed are described here by their faith and hope. The cause of this is Jesus Christ. God had purposes of special favour toward his people, long before he made manifestations of such grace unto them. But the clearness of light, the supports of faith, the efficacy of ordinances, and the proportion of comforts, are all much larger since the manifestation of Christ, than they were before. Yet hypocrites and unbelievers will be ruined for ever, notwithstanding the death of Christ.

The last end is, that we may have life and glory through him; the nearer end is, that, till we attain them, we may have firm belief and hope of them, and rest on God as the giver of them, and so be upheld in our joy and conflicts by the comfort of them. The comfort is no less than this, that being by faith made one with Christ, his present glory is an assurance to us that where he is, we shall be also, John 14. 3.—(88.)

Ver. 22—25. The gospel had already an effect upon believers, to purify their souls, while they obeyed it through the Spirit, and produced at least an unfeigned love of the brethren. The word of God is the great instrument of a sinner's purification. The gospel is called truth, in opposition to error and falsehood. The Spirit convinces the soul of its impurities, furnishes virtues and graces, as faith, Acts 15. 9, hope, 1 John 3. 3, the fear of God, Ps. 34. 9, and the love of Christ. These people purified their souls, but it was through the Spirit. Observe, the souls of christians must be purified before they can so much as love one another unfeignedly, giving up their own interests and indulgences. Without Divine grace we can neither love God nor one another as we ought. And it is the duty of all christians, sincerely and fervently to love one another. Let

them see to it that they live more and more in dependence on the Spirit, by whom this love is wrought in the heart.

All christians are born again, and by this they are brought into a new and near relation to one another. The word of God is the great means of their regeneration, Jam. 1. 18. This new and second birth is much more excellent than the first. By the one we become children of men; by the other, sons and daughters of the Most High. The word of God, being compared to seed, teaches us, that though it be little in appearance, and lies hid a while, yet it grows up and produces excellent fruit at last. The obligation to love is double where there is a spiritual relation. And, remember, the word of God, implanted in the heart by the Holy Ghost, is a means of spiritual life, animating and exciting us in our duty, working a total change in the dispositions and affections of the soul, till it brings to eternal life.

In contrast with the excellency of the renewed spiritual man as born again, observe the vanity of the natural man. In his life and in his fall, he is like grass, Job 14. 2; Isa. 40. 6, 7. All his glory is as the flower of grass; his wit, beauty, strength, vigour, wealth, honour, are but as the flower of grass, which soon withers and dies away. The only way to render this perishing creature incorruptible, is, to receive the word of God, for that remains everlasting truth, and will preserve him to everlasting life, and abide with him for ever. All other distinctions will soon be lost, all other glory end in disgrace, all other unions dissolve and perish. Let us see to it that this word dwells in our hearts, and brings forth fruit in our lives.

We should learn to hear, and thus to receive and love, this holy, living word. We are to despise all the glittering vanities of this perishing life, all outward pomp, yea, all inward worth, all wisdom and natural endowments of the mind, in comparison with the heavenly light of the gospel preached unto us; and rather hazard all than lose that, and banish all other things from the place due to it. We should lodge it in our hearts, as our only treasure here, and the certain pledge of the treasure of glory laid up for us in heaven. To which blessed state may God of his infinite mercy bring us.—(89.)

CHAPTER II.

A temper suitable to the christian character, as born again, is recommended, with daily recourse to Christ as the only foundation, ver. 1—10. Holy conversation among the gentiles directed, 11, 12. And subjects exhorted to pay all proper obedience to their civil governors, ver. 13—17. Also servants to their masters, ver. 18. All to be patient, in imitation of the suffering Saviour, under hardships wrongfully laid upon them, 19—25.

Ver. 1—10. The word of God continually declares the necessity of laying aside all malice, guile, hypocrisy, envy, and evil speaking, in order to receive with meekness the instructions of Christ. The best christians need to be warned against the worst sins. And our best services toward God will neither please him, nor profit us, if we are not conscientious in our duties to men. Evil-speaking is a sign of malice and guile in the heart; and all these combine to hinder our profiting by the word of God.

A new life requires suitable food. Infants desire milk, their desires are fervent and frequent, from an impatient sense of hunger, and are accompanied with the best endeavours the infant is capable of; such must be christians' desires after the word of God: that they may improve in grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour, 2 Pet. 3. 18. Growth and improvement in wisdom and grace are the design and desire of every christian.

Our Lord Jesus Christ is very merciful to us miserable sinners; he has a fulness of grace united to him by faith, when we may taste his goodness in all his providences, in all our spiritual concerns, in all our fears and temptations, in his word and worship every day. But the best of God's servants have in this life only a taste of the consolations of God.

In the prophets, as Isa 8. 14; 28. 16. Christ is called a Stone, to teach his servants that he is their protection and security, the foundation on which they are built, and a rock of offence to all their enemies. The living Stone; this points out the quickening efficacy of his grace, on those dead in sin, and his ever living to make intercession for his people. He is rejected by his own countrymen the jews, and by the generality of mankind; yet chosen of God, sepa-

rated and fore-ordained to be the foundation of the church, ch. 1. 20. He is precious in the excellence of his nature, the dignity of his office, and the glory of his services. Those who expect mercy from this gracious Redeemer, must come to him by an act of the soul; a real endeavour, not a mere fruitless wish, that they may be made a part of this holy and living temple, continually applying for his purchased salvation, and the sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit. All true believers are a holy priesthood; all sacred to God, serviceable to others, endowed with heavenly gifts and graces. This holy priesthood offer up spiritual sacrifices to God, their bodies, souls, affections, prayers, praises, and all their duties. But the most spiritual sacrifices of the best are not acceptable, except through Jesus Christ.

The chief of the works of God is the chief subject of his word. This is the saving of lost mankind by his Son. Therefore is his name as precious perfume, diffused through the whole scriptures. But we must look within them, and desire to see their spiritual sense. We usually huddle them over, and see no further than their outside, and therefore find so little sweetness in them: we search them not; but if we would dig into those golden mines, we should find treasures of comfort that cannot be exhausted, and which would furnish us in the hardest times. Thus this prophecy in Isaiah 28. 16, is in the middle of a sad denunciation of judgment. Christ is the *chief Corner-stone* that unites the whole number of believers into one everlasting temple, and bears the weight of the whole fabric. *Elected* or tried; sin having demolished the first building, God, designing from the ruins of fallen man to raise a more lasting edifice, fitted for it a foundation that might be everlasting. He chose his own Son made flesh. He was God, that he might be a strong foundation, he was man, that he might be suitable to the stones of which the building was to consist. Inestimably *precious* by all the qualities that can give worth to any. Not only thus excellent in himself, but of precious virtue, which he lets forth and imparts to others; a touch of him is the cure of spiritual diseases. It is said, *I lay*; God the Father first thought of this great work, and the accomplishment of

it was by his mighty power, which teaches us its firmness. Behold, I lay; turn your wandering eyes this way, look on this precious Stone, behold him so as to lay hold upon him. To be built on Christ means, to believe in him; but in this many deceive themselves, they consider not what it is, nor the necessity of it that we may partake of the salvation he has wrought. There is in a lively faith when infused into the soul, a clearer knowledge of Christ and his excellency than before, and with him a resting of the soul upon him, as the foundation of its life and comfort, a resolving not to depart from him. *He shall not be confounded*, Psa. 46. 2. Though the frame of the world were cracking about a man's ears, he may hear it unaffrighted who is built on this foundation. The believing soul makes haste to Christ, but it never finds cause to hasten from him. And in that great day, wherein all those shall be filled with confusion who have neglected to make Christ their stay, the believer shall not be confounded. In their present state they may be exercised, but they shall not be confounded, nor ashamed—by no means; they shall be more than conquerors through Him that loved them, Rom. 8. 37.—(88.)

Unto those, therefore, who believed, Christ was precious as the foundation of all their hopes, their chief glory and most valuable treasure; they saw such excellence in him, experienced such comfort from him, and so entirely depended on him for salvation, that they would renounce every thing else rather than come short of an interest in him. But all those who continued disobedient, as the Jewish rulers who called themselves the builders and directors of the church, would fulfil another scripture, Psa. 118. 22. All that are disobedient, take offence at the word of God. They are offended with Christ himself, with his doctrine and with the purity of his precepts; his humble appearance, and the proposal of trusting only to him for their justification before God. But those who reject him as a Saviour, will split upon him as a rock. To see the Jews generally rejecting Christ, and multitudes in all ages slighting him, ought not to discourage us in love and duty to him; for this was foretold by the prophets, and

is a confirmation of our faith in the scriptures and in the Messiah.

All true Christians are a chosen generation; they make one family, a sort of people distinct from the common world; of another spirit, principle, and practice; which they could never be, if they were not chosen in Christ to be such, and sanctified by his Spirit. All the true servants of Christ are a royal priesthood, called to exercise a spiritual dominion over the passions to which others are enslaved. They are a royal priesthood, separated from sin and sinners, consecrated to God, and offering spiritual services and oblations acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. All Christians compose one nation under one head, and governed by the same laws. And they are a holy nation devoted to God, renewed and sanctified by the Holy Spirit. Thus they are God's peculiar people, his choice, his care, and his delight. Then first state is a state of horrid darkness, but they are effectually called out of darkness into a state of marvellous light, joy, pleasure, and prosperity: that they should show forth the praises of the Lord by their spiritual worship, their profession of his truth, their holy conversation and exemplary conduct.

To make this people content, and thankful for the great mercies and dignities brought unto them by the gospel, they are advised to compare their former and their present state. How vast then their obligations to Him who hath made them his people, and hath shown mercy to them!

Many and great are the privileges of God's people, and rich is their inheritance. All his power and wisdom are engaged for their good, and seems it a small thing to be shut out from the presence of God, and to bear his wrath for ever, that so many slight his mercy, and let it pass unregarded? But if you can wallow in the same mire with the ungodly world, and take a share of their sinful ways; if you have your hearts ardent in the love and pursuit of the world, but frozen to God; if you have some bosom idol you hide and entertain, and cannot find in your heart to part with some beloved sin, for all the love and mercy that God hath vouchsafed to man in the Son of his love, Jesus Christ; if you can please and delight

yourself in any way displeasing to God—there can be no assurance that as yet you have obtained mercy. Know you what it is to be destitute of this mercy? It is a woful state, though you had all worldly enjoyments, and were at the top of outward prosperity. And there is nothing that so kindly works repentance as the right apprehension of the mercy and love of God. O let us not dare to abuse and affront the free grace of God, if we mean to be saved by it, but let as many as would be found among those who obtain mercy, walk as his people, whose peculiar inheritance is his mercy.—(88)

2 "Unto salvation." These words are to be added to this verse on the best authorities.

4 "But in God's sight elect and precious."—*Scholefield*.

7, 8. "Unto them that disbelieve the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is become the head of the corner, and a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence. They disbelieving the word, that is, the word of the gospel which contains this testimony, stumble at this corner-stone, wherunto they were appointed." The meaning is that God, the righteous Judge of all the earth, had appointed, or decreed, that destruction, or eternal perdition should be the punishment of those disbelieving persons who wilfully rejected all the evidences that Jesus Christ was the Messiah, the Saviour of the world.—*T. H. Horne*.

Ver. 11, 12. Even the best of men, the chosen generation, the people of God, need exhortation to abstain from the worst sins. Knowing the difficulty, and yet the importance of the duty, the apostle uses his utmost interest in them; Dearly beloved, I beseech you. The duty is to abstain from, and to suppress the first inclination or rise of fleshly lusts. These christians ought to avoid. They are strangers and pilgrims, and must not impede their passage by following the wickedness and lusts of the country through which they pass; these sins war against the soul of man, and therefore our souls ought to war against them. Sin destroys the moral liberty of the soul; it weakens the soul by impairing its faculties; it robs the soul of its comfort and peace; it hinders its present prosperity, and plunges it into everlasting misery. And fleshly lusts are most destructive to man's soul. It is a sore judgment to be given up to them.

Their conversation, in every instance and action of their lives, ought to be

honest, lovely, amiable, and without blame. They lived among the gentiles, idolaters, who slandered them. They now call you evil-doers; vindicate yourselves by good works. There is a day of visitation coming, wherein God may call them to repentance by his word and his grace; and then they will glorify God, and the holy lives of his people will have promoted the happy change.

Ver. 13-17. A christian conversation must be honest; which it cannot be, if there is not a conscientious discharge of all relative duties; the apostle here begins to treat of these distinctly. Christians were not only reputed innovators in religion, but disturbers of the state; it was highly necessary that the apostle should settle that obedience is due to the civil magistrate. The duty required is submission, which includes loyalty and reverence to their persons, obedience to their just laws and commands, and subjection to legal penalties. The particular form of government, the power of the magistrate, and the persons who are to execute this power, are of human institution; but obedience is a general rule, binding in all nations. Particularly to the king, as supreme; the first in dignity and most eminent in degree; or unto governors, rulers commissioned to govern. The reasons to enforce this duty, are, 1. For the Lord's sake, who has ordained magistracy for the good of mankind, who has required obedience and submission, Rom. 13. and whose honour is concerned in the dutiful behaviour of subjects. 2. From the end and use of the magistrate's office, which is, to punish evil-doers, and to praise and encourage all them that do well. They were appointed for the good of society; and where this end is not pursued, the fault is not in the institution, but in their practice. 3. Because it is the will of God, and, consequently, the christian's duty; and the way to silence the malicious slanders of ignorant and foolish men. A christian must endeavour, in all relations, so to behave.

The jews, from Deut. 17. 15, wrongly concluded, that they were bound to obey no sovereign but one taken from among their own brethren; and some of the converted jews thought they were free from subjection, by their relation to

Christ. The christians were free ; but not from duty and obedience to God's law, which requires subjection to the magistrate ; they were free spiritually from the bondage of sin and Satan, and the ceremonial law, with that liberty which the Son of God bestows through the Holy Spirit ; and they must not make their christian liberty a cloak or covering for any wickedness, or the neglect of duty, but must still remember they are the servants of God. Thus honouring all men, loving our brethren, fearing God, and honouring the king, we may experience the comfort of the gospel, and adorn our profession.

13. " Submit yourselves therefore "—*School-field.*

Ver. 18—25. Servants in those days generally were slaves, and had heathen masters, who often used them cruelly, yet the apostle directs them to be subject with due respect to the masters placed over them by Providence, with a fear of dishonouring or offending God. And not only to those pleased with reasonable service, but to the severe, and those angry without cause. The sinful misconduct of one relation, does not justify the sinful behaviour of the other ; the servant is bound to do his duty, though the master be sinfully froward and perverse. But masters are to be meek and gentle to their servants and inferiors. It would be grace, the effect and evidence of grace, acceptable to God, and deserving commendation of man, if from conscientious regard to the authority and will of God, servants patiently endured such treatment as was grievous to be borne. What glory or distinction could it be for professed christians to be patient when corrected for their faults ? But if when they behaved well they were ill treated by their proud and passionate heathen masters, and yet bore it without peevish complaints, or purposes of revenge, and still persevered in their duty, this would be acceptable to God as a distinguishing effect of his grace, and would be rewarded by him.

Here is shown that our obligation to relative duties does not depend either on the character of the persons to whom they should be performed, or on their performing the duties they owe to us,

but on the unalterable relations of things or duties established by God.—(90)

Christians are bound to deny themselves, and take up the cross ; they are called to do so by the commands and example of Christ, by the dispensations of Providence, and by the preparations of Divine grace. They are bound to suffer, when thus called to it. Christ suffered wrongfully, and without cause ; for he did no sin ; he had done no violence, no wrong to any one ; he wrought no iniquity ; his words, as well as actions, were all just and right. Our blessed Redeemer was perfectly holy, and so free from sin, that no provocation whatsoever could extort from him the least sinful or harsh word. Provocations to sin can never justify the commission of it. The rudeness, cruelty, and injustice of others, will not justify christians in reviling and revenge ; the reasons for sin can never be so great, but we have always stronger reasons to avoid it. And the judgment of God will determine justly upon every man, and every cause ; and to that we ought, with patience and resignation, to refer ourselves.

And Christ's death was not designed only for an example of patience under sufferings, ver. 24. Note, the person suffering, Jesus Christ, his own self, in his own body ; not but that he suffered in his soul, Matt. 26. 38, but sufferings of the body were more obvious. The sufferings he underwent were servile and ignominious punishments ! The reason of his sufferings was, he bare our sins ; he bare the punishment of them, and thereby satisfied Divine justice. Hereby he removes them away from us. And the fruits of Christ's sufferings are, our sanctification, the death, the mortification of sin, and a new holy life of righteousness ; for both which we have an example, and powerful motives and ability to perform also, from the death and resurrection of Christ. And our justification ; Christ was bruised and crucified as an expiatory sacrifice, and by his stripes the diseases of our souls are cured.

These things related to all, for all had, without exception, been as sheep going astray, but they had been brought back to the good Shepherd, who laid down his life for the sheep ; thus they were safely lodged in his fold, and partakers of his love, who watched over them

as the Bishop or Overseer of their souls, their all-wise, all-powerful, holy Protector. Here is man's sin; he goes astray; it is his own act, he is not driven, but does voluntarily go astray. His misery, he goes astray from the pasture, from the Shepherd, and from the flock, and so exposes himself to innumerable dangers. Here is the recovery of these by conversion; they are now returned. The word is passive, and shows that the return of a sinner is the effect of Divine grace. This return is, from all their errors and wanderings, to Christ. Sinners, before their conversion, are always going astray; their life is a continued error. Those that expect the love and care of Christ, the universal Pastor, must return to him; must die unto sin, and live unto righteousness. Let us then learn to copy his example when we are reviled and abased, as well as to rely on his salvation, and always keep close under his gracious protection and guidance.

24. Or, "That we being freed from the guilt of our sins,"—*Doddridge*.

CHAPTER III.

The duties of wives and husbands, ver. 1

—7. Christians exhorted to mutual agreement in principle, affection, and kindness, 8—13. And encouraged to patience under persecutions for righteousness' sake, 14—17. in consideration of Christ's having patiently suffered in their stead, and of the rich advantage they have thereby, 18—22.

Ver. 1—7. The duty of wives consists, in subjection, or affectionate submission to the will, and obedience to the just authority of their husbands; which conduct is the most likely to win unbelieving husbands, who reject the word. Every distinct relation has its particular duties, and there is nothing more powerful next to the word of God, to win people, than good conduct, and the careful discharge of relative duties, by those with whom they are connected. The wife must discharge her duty to her own husband, though he obey not the word; and we daily see how evil men watch narrowly the ways and lives of the professors of religion. Therefore the chaste, modest, and faithful conduct of wives, united with the fear of disobliging and grieving them, and reverential regard to the Divine authority, would tend to the conversion of their husbands.

Christian females must be careful as to outward things. All outward ornaments are not absolutely forbidden, but that frivolous affectation and vanity, which delights in finery, and wastes time, attention, and property, in such decorations. Putting on of apparel is not forbidden, but vanity and costliness in apparel. Religious people should take care that all their external behaviour is answerable to their profession of christianity. The outward adorning the body is sensual and excessive, when it is immoderate, and above our degree and station: when we are proud of it, and puffed up with it; when any dress, designed to allure others; when apparel is rich, curious, or superfluous; when fashions are fantastical, imitating the levity and vanity of others.

As conscientious christians will not exceed in the thing itself, so, as far as they use lawful ornaments and comeliness, they will do it without bestowing much either of diligence or delight on the business. But our perverse, crooked hearts are prone to turn all we use into disorder. How few know the right measure and bounds of those two necessities of life, food and raiment! Unless poverty is our carver, and cuts us short, there is scarcely any one who is not bent to something excessive! Far more are beholden to the lowliness of their estate, than the lowliness of their mind for sobriety in these things; and many there are who will not be so bounded, but profusely lavish their time and money upon trifles. But far more comfort will there be on a death-bed, to remember that at such a time, instead of putting ornaments on our own clothes, we helped a naked back to clothing; that we abated somewhat of former superfluities to supply the necessities of the poor—far sweeter will this be, than to remember that we could needlessly cast away many pounds to serve our pride, while we gave perhaps a penny to relieve the poor—(88)

Instead of such outward adorning of the body, the apostle directs christian females to put on something more beautiful and not corruptible, that beautifies the soul, the graces of God's Holy Spirit. The finest ornament of christian women is, a meek and quiet spirit; a tractable easy temper, void of passion, pride, and immoderate anger; discovering itself in

quiet, obliging behaviour toward their husbands and families. If the husband be harsh, and averse to religion, there is no way so likely to win him. The inward beauty of a sanctified heart is especially manifested by a quiet spirit, which will make a good woman easy to herself, and which, being visible to others, becomes an amiable ornament to her, even in the eyes of the world. Meekness and calmness of spirit are amiable in the sight of men, and precious in the sight of God. Thus a true christian's chief care lies in right ordering and commanding his own spirit; for where the hypocrite's work ends, there the true christian's work begins. And thus will do far more to fix the affections, and excite the esteem of a husband, than any studied ornaments or fashionable apparel, attended by a froward and contentious temper.

The duties of a quiet spirit, and of subjection to husbands, have been practised by the greatest and best of women. By Sarah, who obeyed her husband, and followed him from Ur of the Chaldeans, and called him lord, thereby acknowledging his superiority over her; and this, though she was declared a princess, by God from heaven. Her daughters they are who imitate her in faith and good works, and readily perform their duty, without fear or force, out of conscience toward God, and sense of duty to their husbands. Christians ought to do their duty to one another, from a willing mind, and in obedience to the command of God. Wives should be subject to their husbands, not from dread and amazement, but from desire to do well, and please God.

The husband's duty to the wife implies a mutual communication of goods and persons, as those who know the word of God, and their own duty. Giving due respect unto her, and maintaining her authority, protecting her, supporting her credit, delighting in her conversation, and placing trust and confidence in her. She is the weaker vessel, and so ought to be defended; but in other and higher respects, is equal to her husband. They are heirs together of the free favour and gift of God, which is eternal life, of all the blessings of this life and the other, and therefore should live peaceably and quietly one with another, which, if they do not, their

prayers one with another, and one for another, will be hindered, so that often they will not pray at all, or will pray with a discomposed mind, therefore without success. Then let all married people take care so to behave themselves lovingly and peaceably one to another, that they may not hinder the success of their prayers, for a blessing upon each other, their family, and all near and dear to them.

Happy those persons, in any society of marriage or friendship, who converse together as those that shall live together in eternal life. Life! a sweet word, but sweetest in this sense! that life above is indeed alone worthy of the name, and thus, which we have here, let it not be called life, but a continual dying, an incessant journey toward the grave. If you reckon years, it is but a short moment to him that attains the fullest old age; but reckon miseries and sorrows, it is long to him that dies young. O that the only, blessed life, were more known, and then it would be more desired. And the heirs of this life cannot live without prayer. Can the husband and wife have that love, wisdom, and meekness, which may make their life happy, and that blessing which may make their affairs successful, while they neglect God, the only Giver of these and all good things? Prayer sweetens their converse where it is used. And it is not enough that they pray with the family, but even husband and wife together by themselves, and also with their children. The apostle presses this as an argument. He well knew that those who are acquainted with prayer, find such unspeakable sweetness in it, that they will rather do any thing than be prejudiced therein. And that you may pray much, live holily; and that you may live holily, be much in prayer.—(88.)

3. The ancient medals and works of sculpture show the plaited tresses condemned by the apostles, with all the expensive and lascivious head decorations of ancient females. *A Clarke* remarks, No female head ever looks so well, as when it is adorned by its own hair alone.

Ver. 8—13. Christians should endeavour to be all of one mind in the great points of faith, in affection and in practice, Rom. 15. 5. not according to man's pleasure, but God's word. And though christians cannot always be exactly of the same mind, yet they should have

compassion one of another, and love as brethren; they ought not to persecute or hate one another, but should love one another with more than common affection; they should love as brethren, the rather as christianity requires pity to the distressed, and civility to all.

Christ has by his word and example called us to bless them that curse us, and has settled a blessing on his people as their everlasting inheritance, though they were unworthy. A christian's calling invests him with glorious privileges, and obliges him to difficult duties. All the true servants of God infallibly inherit a blessing, though the full possession is reserved to another state and world.

If any man desires to live comfortably on earth, or to possess eternal life in heaven, he must bridle his tongue from wicked, abusive, or deceitful words. He must forsake and depart far from evil actions, do all the good he can, and seek peace with all men, pursuing it though it flees from him. For God, all-wise and every where present, watches over the righteous and takes care of them. None could or should harm those who copied the example of Christ, who is perfect and essential goodness, and who did good to others as his followers.

Acquaint yourselves then with the word, the rule of holiness, and with reference to that look on one another, and be zealous of progress in the ways of holiness. Choose to converse with such as may excite you and advance you, both by their advice and example. Let not the corrupt generation in which you live be the worse by you, or you the worse by it. As far as you necessarily engage in some conversation with those who are unholy, let them not pull you into the mire, but, if you can, help them out. In this way you shall have sweet inward peace and joy, as well as some outward advantage; men will not so readily harm you. And if you do not escape suffering by your holy conduct, yea if you suffer for it, yet in that you are happy.

13 Or, "Imitators of the Good One." This appellation is applied to God to the exclusion of all others.—*Macknight*.

Ver. 14—17. To suffer for righteousness' sake is the honour and happiness of a christian; the delight of it is greater than the torment, the honour

more than the disgrace, and the gain much greater than the loss. Therefore christians have no reason to be afraid

of the threats or rage of any of their enemies. These are the objects of God's curse, and can do nothing to you but by his permission, therefore trouble not yourselves about them. Satan will instigate the natural enmity of man's heart against the gospel, and by connecting with it the ambition, jealousy, and bigotry of rulers, will lead them to persecute the church. But let not believers be troubled about such matters, so as by confusion of mind to be unfit for their duty, or in danger of listening to temptation, and denying Christ, as the apostle himself once had done. Instead of terrifying themselves with the fear of men, let believers sanctify the Lord God in their hearts, Isa. 8. 12, 13; Luke 12. 4. We sanctify the Lord God in our hearts, when we adore him; when our thoughts of him are awful and reverent; when we rely upon his power, trust his faithfulness, submit to his wisdom, and give him glory. We sanctify God before others, when our deportment invites and encourages others to glorify and honour him. They hoped in God, through Christ, for eternal life, and in this confidence they renounced present advantages. What therefore was the ground and reason of their hope? This question they should be prepared to answer, and to show from the word of God and their own experience, that they hoped for happiness on reasonable grounds, and acted wisely in renouncing and suffering all for the sake of it. The defence of our religion ought to be made with modesty and meekness, in the fear of God, with jealousy over ourselves, and reverence to superiors.

The fear of God turns other fears out of doors; there is no room for them where this great fear is; it disturbs not as they do, yea, it brings a great quiet, as they brought trouble. It is an ease for the heart to have but one thing to deal with; for many times the multitude of carnal fears is more troublesome than their weight, as flies that vex most by their numbers.—(88.)

The conscience is good, when it does its office well, when it is kept pure and cleansed from guilt, by the blood of Christ; then it will justify you, though men accuse you. A good conversation

in Christ is a holy life, according to the doctrine and example of Christ. You may think it hard to suffer for well-doing, for keeping a good conscience, and a good conversation; but be not discouraged; it is better for you, though worse for your enemies, that you suffer for well-doing than for evil-doing. If the sufferings of the good for well-doing be severe, what will the sufferings of the wicked people be for evil-doing? That person is in a sad condition upon whom sin and suffering meet; sin makes suffering to be extreme, unprofitable, comfortless, and destructive. Surely it is better to suffer for well-doing than for evil-doing, whatever our natural impatience at times may suggest.

15. *J. P. Smith* considers that the reading "Christ" instead of "God" is established by sufficient evidence, therefore we have here a precept to pay to Christ that reverential homage which is due to the most Holy One alone. The connexion shows the sentiment to be, Revere and trust in Christ, as your Refuge from the malice and injuries of men.

Ver 18—22. The example of Christ is an argument for patience under sufferings. He was not exempt from sufferings in this life, though he had no guilt of his own, and could have declined all suffering if he had pleased. Having no sin of his own, and as he suffered for sin, it must be for the sins of others. This punishment was suffered, to expiate and to make an atonement for sin; and it extends to all sins. In the case of our Lord's suffering, he that knew no sin, suffered instead of those who knew no righteousness. The merit and perfection of Christ's sacrifice were such, that for him to suffer once was enough. Heb. 7. 27. The blessed end and design of our Lord's sufferings were, to bring us to God, to reconcile us to God, to give us access to the Father, and to bring us to eternal glory. He was put to death in respect of his human nature, but was quickened and raised by the power of the Holy Spirit. If Christ was not exempted from sufferings, why should christians expect to be so? If he suffered, to expiate our sins, why should not we be content, when our sufferings are only for trial and correction? If he, though perfectly just, suffered, why should not we, who are criminals? If he suffered, to bring us to God, shall not we submit to difficulties, since they are of such

use to quicken us in our return to God, and in the performance of duty to him?

Shall any offer to bear the name of christian, who pleases himself in the way of sin? and can delight and sport himself with it, when he considers that Christ suffered for sin? Do not think it, you who still account sin sweet, which he found so bitter; who account that light which was so heavy to Him, and made his soul heavy to death. The right view of Him, pierced by our sins, makes the real christian an avowed enemy to sin. He may be surprised by it, but there is no possibility of reconciliation betwixt them. Do not gaze upon trifles, but look to the Saviour, and receive him, that he may be yours.—(88.)

It was not to be thought wonderful that so many refused to believe in the risen and glorified Saviour, through the preaching of the apostles by the Holy Spirit, as the case had been the same of old. Christ, as God, and with reference to his future incarnation, had gone by his Spirit, inspiring his servant Noah to denounce the approaching deluge, and preach repentance to that incorrigible generation, who perished in their sins, and were in the prison of hell when the apostle wrote, being confined there till the judgment of the great day. Thus intimating to the jews, that God would not wait much longer; they had now an offer of mercy, those that accepted it should be saved, but those who rejected Christ and the gospel, should be as certainly destroyed as ever the disobedient in the times of Noah were. Because the hearers were dead and disembodied when the apostle speaks of them, he properly calls them spirits *now* in prison. Not that they were in prison when Christ preached to them, as some would take it.

The same Christ that came in his flesh, and preached the gospel to the world, came to them in the days of Noah by his Spirit, and in Noah preached to those unbelievers; who because they repented not, but continued in disobedience, are now condemned spirits in hell.—(72a.)

God takes exact notice of the means and advantages people in all ages have had. It is here noticed of the old world, that Christ sent his Spirit, gave warning by Noah. But though the patience of God waits long upon sinners,

yet it will cease at last. And the spirits of disobedient sinners, as soon as they are out of their bodies, are committed to the prison of hell, from whence there is no redemption. The way of the most is neither the best, the wisest, nor the safest way to follow; better to follow the eight in the ark, saved through the flood, than the millions drowned by the flood, and condemned to hell. Alas that few, even to this day, receive Christ as their Saviour, and flee to him for refuge from the wrath to come!

Noah's salvation in the ark upon the water, which carried him above the floods, prefigured the salvation of all true believers. Christ and his church are the true ark; all within are safe; all without will be swept by the deluge of Divine vengeance into destruction. That temporal salvation by the ark was a type, the antitype whereunto is the eternal salvation of believers by baptism; to prevent mistakes about which, the apostle declares what he means by saving baptism; not the outward ceremony of washing with water, which, in itself, does no more than put away the filth of the flesh, but that baptism, of which the baptismal water formed the sign. Not the outward ordinance, but the answer of a good conscience towards God, when a man, by the regeneration of the Spirit, was enabled to profess repentance, faith, and purposes of a new life, uprightly, and as in the presence of God. The apostle shows that the efficacy of baptism to salvation, depends not upon the work done, but upon the resurrection of Christ; which includes his death, and is the foundation of our faith and hope, to which we are rendered conformable by dying to sin, and rising again to holiness and newness of life. Let us then beware that we rest not upon outward forms.

The inward grace of baptism, even regeneration, from which all holy affections and actions spring, alone introduces into the true church. Then, while we profess ourselves to be the disciples of Christ, and to be partakers of his grace, let us seek the true baptism of the regenerating and sanctifying Spirit of God. Let us trust in the merits, power, love, and truth of Him who died for our sins, and rose again for our justification, and who is gone into heaven, and is at the right hand

of God, who sent the Comforter, as the First-fruits of his intercession, John 16. 7. His being said to sit there, imports absolute rest and cessation from all further sufferings, and advancement to the highest dignity and sovereign power. Angels, authorities, and powers, are all made subject to Christ Jesus; all power in heaven and earth, to command, to give law, issue orders, and pronounce a final sentence, is committed to Jesus, as God-man, which his enemies will find to their everlasting sorrow, but his servants to their eternal joy.

Let us learn to look on the ordinances of God spiritually, and to inquire after the spiritual effect and working of them on our consciences. We would willingly have all religion reduced to outward things; this is our natural choice; and to compound for the spiritual part, we would add and give more outward performance and ceremony. Micah 6. 6. Will the outward use of the word and sacraments do it? then all shall be well. Baptized we are; and I will hear much and communicate often if I can reach it! All this I do, and much more—or, at least, I now promise. Ay, but when all that is done, there is yet one thing may be wanting, and if it be so, all *that* amounts to nothing! Art thou still a stranger to Christ? Do thy beloved sins still lodge with thee, and keep possession of thy heart? Many who were baptized, and constant attendants on the ordinances, yet have remained without Christ, have died in their sins, and are now past recovery! Rest not then till thou art with Christ; till thou art cleansed by the Spirit of Christ and the blood of Christ. He lives to impart both. His resurrection from the dead is here mentioned as that, by virtue whereof we are assured of this purifying and peace. He arose and ascended, and now sits and reigns in glory, and shall do so till all his enemies become his footstool.—(88.)

19. The explanation given in the comment appears to convey the true sense of this difficult passage, but the interpretation of *Horsley* should be mentioned. He considers that the human soul of Christ visited the abode of departed spirits, between his death and resurrection, but that he did not preach repentance or faith; the preaching of either comes too late for the departed souls. These souls had believed and repented, or they would not have been in that place which the soul of the Redeemer visited. Nor was the end of his preaching any

liberation of them from purgatorial pains, of which the scriptures know nothing. But if he went to proclaim to them the glad tidings that he had actually offered the sacrifice of their redemption, and was about to appear before the Father, as their Intercessor, in the merit of his own blood, this would give new animation and assurance to their hope of the consummation, in due season, of their bliss.

The reader will observe that this view adopts somewhat of the idea of an intermediate state, an unscriptural theory justly objected to by christians in general.

18-20. Being raised again by the energetic operations of the Holy Spirit; by which Spirit we are assured he once preached to the antediluvian world, those rebellious people, (whose souls are now reserved awaiting the final judgment,) who provoked, by their obstinacy, the patient forbearance of God, in the days of Noah, &c.—*Shuttleworth*.

20. "Through the water"—*Scholefield*. It was the ark, and the safety of those which were in it, and not the water, that prefigured the gospel salvation in Christ, as signified by baptism, by means of which, when the thing signified by it is found in us, through faith in him, we are saved—as is explained in the next verse.—*Guyse*.

21. A proportional applying of the former example, to the time which followed the coming of Christ, for that preservation of Noah in the waters, was a figure of our baptism; not as though the material water of baptism saves us, as those waters which bore up the ark saved Noah, but because Christ, with his inward virtue, which the outward baptism shadows, preserves us, being washed, so that we may call upon God with a good conscience. The conscience being sanctified may freely call upon God.—*Reformers' Bible*.

It is well known the jews had a great stress upon their lustrations. The apostle, therefore, very properly cautions them against such foolish dependence.—*Huddridge*.

— Outward baptism is common to the hypocrites as well as to the faithful. It comes not unto the soul. It hath no saving power in itself. This may admonish us not to put too much trust and confidence in the outward sacraments, or to rely thereupon, that we are baptized and partake of the Lord's supper, but always to seek the spiritual grace of the sacraments.—*Ames*.

CHAPTER IV.

The consideration of christians' sufferings is urged for purity and holiness in heart and life, ver. 1-6. And of the approaching dissolution of the Jewish state, for sobriety, watchfulness, prayer, and mutual love, and for a faithful discharge of religious trusts, 7-11. Believers cautioned against exposing themselves to punishments for their own faults; but encouraged to rejoice, and glory in reproaches and sufferings for Christ, instead of being surprised or dismayed at them; and to commit their souls, in a course of well-doing, to the care of a faithful God, 12-19.

Ver. 1-6. Christ hath suffered for

us in the flesh, or in his human nature. The inference is, arm and fortify yourselves likewise with the same mind, courage, and resolution. Expect no satisfaction from any forbidden indulgence, continually resist the influence of sin in your hearts, and endeavour to prevent its breaking forth in your lives. Some of the strongest and best arguments against all sorts of sin are taken from the sufferings of Christ. He died, to destroy it; and though he could cheerfully submit to the worst sufferings, yet he could never submit to the least sin. In the mind—the beginning of all true mortification lies in the mind; not in penances and hardships upon the body. But the mind of man is carnal, full of enmity; the understanding is darkened, being alienated from the life of God, Eph. 4. 18. Man is partial, blind, and wicked, till renewed and sanctified by regenerating grace.

Temptations could not prevail, were it not for man's own corruption; but true christians make the will of God, not their own lusts or desires, the rule of their lives and actions. And true conversion makes a marvellous change in the heart and life. It brings a man from all his old lusts, wherein he delighted, and from the common ways and vices of the world, to the will of God. It alters the mind, judgment, affections, and conversation. When a man is truly converted, it is very grievous to him to think how the time past of his life has been spent; the hazard he has run so many years, the mischief he has done to others, the dishonour to God, and the loss he has sustained, afflict him. While the will of man is unsanctified and corrupt, he walks in wicked ways; and makes a bad condition daily worse and worse. One sin draws on another. Six sins are here mentioned which have dependence one upon another. It is a christian's duty not only to abstain from gross wickedness, but also from things that occasion sin, or appear evil. Excess of wine and immoderate feasting is forbidden, as well as lust and idolatry. Yet the unconverted think it strange their friends should be so much altered, and not run to the same excesses and luxury as before. They speak evil of their persons, of their way, their religion, and their God. But those who are really converted, will not return to their

former course. Neither persuasions nor reproaches will prevail with them to be or to do as they were wont to do. Thus the temper and the behaviour of true christians seem very strange to ungodly men. That they should despise what every one else is fond of; that they should believe things which to others seem incredible; that they should delight in what is irksome; be zealous where they have no visible interest to serve, and depend so much upon hope. And the world will speak evil of believers, though reaping the fruits of their piety and charity.

For the comfort of the servants of God, it is added, that the malignant world will soon be called to account for all their foolish jests, slanders, and falsehoods, against the faithful people of God. Here "the dead" seem to mean those already dead; "the quick" those then alive upon the earth.

The gospel had been preached to those since dead, that they might by the proud and carnal judgment of wicked men be condemned as evil-doers, some even suffering death. But that being quickened to a Divine life by the Holy Spirit, they might live to God as his devoted servants, and his witnesses among their persecutors. Their transient afflictions and sufferings soon ended in perfect happiness. They glorified God in life and death, and were comforted by him. The gospel had been the means of preparing them for these things. This seems the meaning of the verse, though some explain it of those dead in sin, to whom the gospel was preached, that they might be quickened and converted.

The present day is a favoured time in this respect; yet if the Spirit of life dwell in us, the world will judge us worthy of scorn and reproach while God will account us deserving of that glorious kingdom for which we suffer. But it is no matter how we are judged according to men in the flesh, if we live according to God in the Spirit.

1, 2 As "the flesh" is sometimes taken, in a literal sense, for the body, and at other times for the corruption of human nature, "he that has suffered in the flesh" may be considered in either of those views, as in this paraphrase "Whoever has crucified the old man, the body of sin, or the flesh with its affections and lusts, according to the design and in virtue of the death of Christ"—*Guyar*.

The word *flesh* in these verses seems to be used in three different senses, 1. The holy human

nature of Christ. 2. The depraved nature of man, the body of sin and death. 3. The mortal body, in which the soul tabernacles during its continuance in this world. The contrast between "the lusts of man" and "the will of God" should be noticed.—*T. Scott*.

6 Or, "Besides, for this purpose the gospel hath been preached even to the dead, (the gentiles,) that although they might be condemned indeed by men in the flesh, (who persecuted them,) yet they might live eternally by God in the spirit."—*Macknight*.

Ver. 7—11. The destruction of the Jewish church and nation foretold by our Saviour was very near. And the speedy approach of death and judgment is the concern of all, to which these words naturally lead our minds.

It helps much to carry through difficulties to see land near, The end of all things is at hand. An end of a few poor delights, and of the many vexations of this wretched life; an end of temptations and sins, the worst of all evils, yea an end of the imperfect fashion of our best things here, an end of prayer itself, to which succeeds the new song of endless praises.—(85)

Be ye therefore sober. Let your minds be grave, ^{stead}, and solid; and observe strict temperance and sobriety in all worldly enjoyments. Do not suffer yourselves to be caught with your former sins. The consideration of our approaching end is a powerful argument to make us sober in all worldly matters, and nest in religion. And those who would pray to purpose, must watch over their own spirits, and watch all fit opportunities. When the inclinations of the body are governed by God's word, and the wants of the body submitted to the interests of the soul, it is not the soul's enemy, but its friend and helper.

All these things show there ought to be in all christians fervent charity towards one another. There are so many things amiss in all, that unless love covers, excuses, and forgives in others, mistakes and faults for which every one needs the forbearance of others. Satan will prevail to excite perpetual divisions and discords. But we are not to suppose that charity will cover or make amends for the sins of those who exercise it, so as to induce God to forgive them. This would be subversive of the whole gospel. Gal. 2. 21, and the abuse of these words has occasioned many to neglect Christ and to continue

impenitent, under the false idea, that their alms-deeds will procure pardon. Christians ought not only to be charitable, but hospitable, one to another. And whatever a christian does by way of charity or hospitality, he ought to do cheerfully. We should account ourselves not masters, but only stewards of the manifold grace, or various gifts of God. Whatever gift any man receives of God's free bounty, whether natural abilities, learning, wealth, influence, or spiritual endowments, he is to employ and improve it for the advantage of his brethren. The nature of a christian's work, which is high work and hard work, the goodness of the Master, and the excellence of the reward, require that our endeavours should be serious and vigorous. And in all the duties and services of life, we should aim at the glory of God as our chief end. 1 Cor. 10. 31. These rules ought to be followed and practised; that others may see our good works, and glorify our Father who is in heaven, Matt. 5. 16, through Jesus Christ, who has procured and given these gifts to men, Eph. 1. 8; and through whom alone we and our services are accepted of God, Heb. 13. 15; to whom Jesus Christ, be praise and dominion for ever and ever.

As it is most just, so it is most sweet, to aim in all at this, that God be glorified. That is the only worthy and happy design, which fills the heart with heavenliness and heavenly calmness, sets it above the clouds and storms of those passions which disquiet low, self-seeking minds. He is a miserable, unsettled wretch, who cleaves to himself and forgets God; is only perplexed about his credit, and gain, and base ends, which are often broken, and which, when he attains, both he and they must shortly perish together. When his estate or designs, or any comforts fail, how can he look to Him, at whom he looked so little before? But he who has resigned himself, and his all to God, may say confidently that the Lord is his portion. The christian's aim is to have nothing in himself, nor in any thing but on this tenure, All for the glory of my God! And as the love of God grows in the heart, this purpose grows; the higher the flame rises, the purer it is. It is more often in our minds; even the thought of it becomes more generally applied to all our ways and employ-

ments. It is this that turns all ordinary works into gold, into sacrifices, by the touch of it. And poor and short-lived is the glory and grandeur of men; like themselves it is a shadow; and nothing but glory through Christ Jesus, is solid and lasting, that is supreme, and abideth for ever.—(88.)

Ver. 12—19. The frequent repetition of counsel and comfort to christians, shows, what great danger these converts were in from persecutions. Though the trials were sharp, yet they were designed, not to ruin them, but to try their sincerity, strength, patience, and trust in God. They ought rather to rejoice under their sufferings, because they are of the same kind, and for the same cause, that Christ suffered, 2 Thess. 1. 7. From the fiery trial the apostle descends to that of the tongue, by slander and reproach for the name or sake of Christ. This evinced that the Holy Spirit, who is the Author of all that is truly glorious and excellent in men, rested upon them. Happy are ye, because ye have the Spirit of God to fortify and comfort you; and the Spirit of God is also the Spirit of glory, who will prepare you for eternal glory. This glorious Spirit rests upon you, resides with you, dwells in you, supports you; and is not this an unspeakable privilege? By your patience and fortitude in suffering, by your dependence upon the promises of God, and adhering to the word the Holy Spirit hath revealed, he is glorified; but by the contempt and reproaches cast upon you, the Spirit is evil spoken of, and is blasphemed.

One would think such cautions as these were needless to christians. But their enemies falsely charged them with these and other foul crimes. And though it is not common for believers to suffer as malefactors, yet they often bring odium on themselves by officiousness, and intermeddling with matters that do not belong to them: but reproach for such things must not be charged to persecuting malice. It is when any man suffers for the cause of Christ, and with a patient christian spirit, that he ought not to account it shame, but honour, and ought to glorify God who has thus dignified him. The best of men need to be warned against the worst of sins. Also, there is very little comfort in sufferings, when

we bring them upon ourselves by our own sin and folly. It is not the suffering, but the cause that makes the martyr. We have reason to thank God if he calls us to suffer for his truth and gospel; but we should be silent, or humbly confess our sins and folly, as the cause of our sorrows, when we bring them upon ourselves by our own misconduct.

A time of universal calamity was at hand, as foretold by our Saviour, Matt. 24. 9, 10. Consider these judgments will but begin with you that are God's house and family. Your troubles will be but light and short, in comparison with what shall befall the wicked world; your own countrymen the jews, and the infidels and idolatrous people among whom you live. What then shall be the end of those who obey not the gospel of God? And if such things befall them in this life, how awful will the day of judgment be!

It is true that the righteous are scarcely saved; even those who endeavour to walk uprightly in the ways of God. This imports not any uncertainty or hazard in the thing itself, as to the end, in respect of the purpose and performance of God, but only the great difficulties and hard encounters in the way; that they go through so many temptations and tribulations, so many fightings without and fears within. The christian is so simple and weak, his enemies are so crafty and powerful, the oppositions of the wicked world, their hatred, scorns, and molestations, the sleights and violence of Satan, and above all, the strength of his own corruptions, which need such constant purifying by afflictions and trials, that he is of necessity sometimes so drained, and brought so low, that there is scarcely strength or life remaining in him. And truly all outward difficulties would be as nothing, were it not for the incubrance of lusts and corruptions within. These clog and trouble him worst, and he can neither shake them off nor prevail against them, without much pains, many prayers and tears; and many times, after much wrestling, he scarcely finds that he has gained ground. It is so in all duties, such a fighting and continual combat with a revolting backsliding heart, the flesh still pulling and dragging downwards. Thou that findest so little stop and conflict, who goest thy round of outward duties and art no

more troubled, hast need to inquire, Am I right? Have I not yet to begin? Is this the way described in scripture? And if the way of the righteous be so hard, then how hard shall be the end of the ungodly sinner, who walks in sin with delight, and thinks the righteous is a fool for all his pains. But the wicked man is the fool, and in the end shall find it so, when he shall not be able to stand in judgment. Where shall he then appear, who would gladly be smothered under the mountains, if they could shelter him from appearing?—(89.)

Let those who suffer according to the will of God, look chiefly to the safety of their souls, which cannot be kept secure, otherwise than by committing them to God, who will undertake the charge; for he is their Creator, and has freely made many kind promises of eternal salvation, in which he will show himself faithful and true. If suffering from without, raise sinful and tormenting passions within, the soul is the greatest sufferer. And the only way to keep the soul well, is, to commit it to God in well-doing. Commit your souls to God by solemn dedication, prayer, and patient perseverance in well-doing, Rom. 2. 7. He is your Creator, and faithful in all his promises. And he will certainly overrule all to the final advantage of the believer.

15 "A busy body." The word is *allatrispiscopus*, and signifies an inspector of another, an intermeddler in other men's concerns. A temper that appeared much among the jews, and which would naturally give great offence to the roman. — *Greenfield, Vulpy.*

18 This whole verse is taken from Prov. 11. 31. Behold, the righteous shall be recompensed in the earth; how much more the wicked and the sinner! This the greek version translates as the apostle quotes it.

— The salvation here spoken of, seems from the context to be, mostly at least, of a temporal nature. The principal design of the passage is to prepare believers against the severest sufferings for Christ, and the calamities then coming upon the jewish state. But if it is referred to a spiritual and eternal salvation, it is to be understood only of the extreme difficulties, troubles, sufferings, and apparent dangers, through which the righteous were to pass in their way to heaven, and not of any real hazard, as to the event, with respect to the purpose, promise, and power of God for accomplishing it. — *Guyse.*

— If the condition of the faithful be so hard, the condition of the unbelievers must be altogether intolerable. — *Ames.*

CHAPTER V.

Elders exhorted and encouraged to be cheerful, disinterested, and humble, ver.

1—4. Younger christians are required to submit to their elders, and all of them one to another; and to yield with humility and patience, to the hand of God; to cast all their care on him, and to be sober, watchful, and stedfast in the faith against all temptations of the devil, 5—9. Prayers for their growth and establishment: concluding with salutations and a benediction, 10—14.

Ver. 1—4. The apostle Peter exhorts the elders, and to give force to his exhortation tells them he was their fellow-elder. He witnessed the sufferings of Christ, and adds, that he was also a partaker of the glory in some degree revealed at the transfiguration, Matt. 17. 1—3, and which shall be completely enjoyed at the second coming of Jesus Christ. How different the spirit and behaviour of Peter from those of his pretended successors! He does not command and domineer, but exhorts. He does not claim sovereignty over all pastors and churches. It was the peculiar honour of Peter and a few more, to be the witnesses of Christ's sufferings; but it is the privilege of all true christians to partake of the glory that shall be revealed.

The pastor's duty is three-fold. 1. To feed the flock; by preaching the sincere word of God, and ruling according to the word of God. 2. The pastors of the church must take the oversight thereof, do the office of bishops, or overseers; the word signifies, by personal care and vigilance over the flock committed to their charge. 3. They must practise the holiness, self-denial, mortification, and other christian duties, which they preach and recommend to the people. These duties must be performed, not from compulsion of the civil power, or constraint for fear of shame, but from a willing mind that takes pleasure in the work. Not for any profits belonging to the office, but of a ready mind; regarding the flock more than the fleece, sincerely and cheerfully endeavouring to serve the church of God; neither as being lords over God's heritage, tyrannizing over them by force, nor imposing unscriptural human inventions upon them, Matt. 20. 25; 2 Cor. 1. 24. These poor, dispersed, suffering christians, were the flock of God, redeemed to God by the great Shepherd, living in holy love and communion one with another, according to the will of God. They are also dignified with the title of God's heritage

or clergy; his peculiar lot, chosen out of the common multitude for his own people, to enjoy his special favour, and to do him special service. The pastors of the church ought to consider their people as the flock of God, as God's heritage. They are not their's, to be lorded over; but they are God's people, and should be treated with love, meekness, and tenderness, for the sake of him to whom they belong. Christ is the chief Shepherd of the whole flock and heritage of God. He bought them, and rules them; he defends and saves them for ever. All inferior shepherds derive their authority from him, and are accountable to him. And all faithful ministers will receive a crown of unfading glory, infinitely better and more honourable than all the authority, reputation, wealth, and pleasure of the world. What, compared with this, are all those things which many nominal pastors greedily desire?

3. This is the voice of St. Peter, in his catholic epistle to the catholic church. According to him there are to be no lords over God's heritage. —*A. Clarke* Not proudly and tyrannically taking upon them to domineer over the faith of God's people, or, in an overbearing and oppressive manner, tyrannizing over the church which heritage of God. —*Bishop Hall*.

Ver. 5—9. The younger and inferior are to submit themselves to the elder; to give due respect and reverence to their persons, and to yield to their admonitions, reproofs, and authority, enjoining and commanding what the word of God requires, Heb. 13. 17. They should all be subject one to another, so as to receive reproofs and counsels, and be ready to perform all offices of friendship and charity one to another. These duties being contrary to the proud nature and selfish interests of men, they need to have their minds, behaviour, and whole frame, adorned with humility, as the most beautiful habit they can wear. This will render obedience and duty easy and pleasant; but if you are disobedient and proud, God will oppose and crush you: for he resisteth the proud, while he giveth grace to the humble. Humility is the great preserver of peace and order in all christian churches and societies; pride is the great disturber of them. Where God gives grace to be humble, he will give wisdom, faith, and holiness.

It behoved them to humble themselves

as guilty, polluted, wretched sinners, under the powerful hand of God, that, submitting to his righteousness, they might be reconciled to him by faith in Christ, and in due time exalted to the glory, honour, and immortality prepared for his saints after the trials allotted them. Patience under God's chastisements, submission to his pleasure, repentance, prayer, and hope in his mercy, will engage his help and relief in due time, Jam. 4, 7, 10. To be humbly dependent, and subjected to our reconciled God, will bring greater comfort to the soul than the gratification of pride and ambition. But it is to be in *due time*, not thy fancied time, but God's own wisely appointed time. Thou thinkest, Now I am sinking; if he help not now it will be too late. Yet He sees it otherwise. He can let thee sink still lower, and bring thee up again. He does but stay till the most fit time. Thou canst not see it now, but thou shalt see it, that his chosen time is absolutely best. God waiteth to be gracious, Isa 30, 18. Does he wait, and wilt not thou? What difficulties will not the firm belief of His wisdom, power, and goodness surmount! Then be humble under his hand —(88)

These christians were already under very hard circumstances, and what was foretold of greater hardships yet coming, might excite care and fear about the issue. Foreseeing this they are advised to cast all care of themselves upon God. Throw your cares, which are so cutting and distracting, which wound your souls, and pierce your hearts, upon the wise and gracious providence of God; trust in him with a firm composed mind, for he careth for you. He is willing to release you of your care, and take the care of you upon himself; he will avert what you fear, or support you under it. He will order all events, so as shall convince you of his love and tenderness; and all shall be so ordered that good shall come unto you, Matt. 6, 25; Psal. 84, 11; Rom. 8, 28.

The best christians are apt to labour under the burden of anxious and excessive care. It is "all your care;" personal cares, family cares, cares for the present, and cares for the future, for themselves, for others, for the church. These are very burdensome, and too often very sinful, when they arise from unbelief and diffidence, when they tor-

ture and distract the mind, unfit us for our duties, and hinder our delight in the service of God. The best remedy is, to cast our care upon God, and resign every event to his wise and gracious determination. Firm belief that the Divine will and counsels are right, calms the spirit of man.

Truly the godly too often forget this, and fret themselves to no purpose. They wrestle with their burdens themselves, and do not entirely and freely roll them over on God. They are surcharged with cares, and he asks to have them, yet they will not give them to him! They think to spare him, but indeed in thus they disobey, and dishonour, and so grieve him; they find the grief return upon themselves, yet cannot learn to be wise! Perplex not thyself with outward things. Seek not vain things, nor great things, but seek what is needful and convenient in God's judgment, and refer thyself to that. And as for thy spiritual state, lay the care of that upon God also. Lie not complaining and arguing, but up and be doing, and the Lord thy God shall be with thee, 1 Chron. 22, 16. Many souls that have some truth of grace fall much behind in their progress, by this accustomed way of endless questionings, and poring on their condition. Refer to God's disposal as touching thy comforts and supplies. The whole golden mines of all spiritual comfort and good are his, and the Spirit itself. Then, will he not furnish what is fit for thee, if thou humbly attend on him, and lay the care of providing for thee upon his wisdom and love?—(85)

See our danger from an enemy more cruel and restless than even the worst of men, an adversary, that cruel adversary *of yours*, who aims to destroy your souls. The devil, he is a roaring lion, hungry, fierce, strong and cruel; his whole design is to devour and destroy souls. He is unwearied and restless in his malicious endeavours; he always is studying and contriving whom he may ensnare to their eternal ruin. Our duty from hence plainly is, to be sober, to govern both the outward and the inward man, by the rules of temperance. To be vigilant; suspicious of constant danger from this spiritual enemy, watchful and diligent to prevent his designs. Satan aims at the faith of God's people: if he can overturn their faith, and draw

them into apostasy, he will gain his point, and ruin their souls; therefore they must resist. Stedfast, or solid, by faith. This is absolutely necessary for resistance. A man cannot fight upon a quagmire, there is no standing without firm ground to tread upon; this faith alone furnishes. It lifts the soul to the firm advanced ground of the promises, and fixes it there. It is not said, stedfast by your own purposes and resolutions, but, stedfast by faith. The power of God becomes ours by faith, for that is contained and engaged in the word of promise. Faith layshold there, and there finds Almighty strength. Faith sets the soul in Christ, and there it looks down and sees all temptations, as raging waves, breaking themselves into foam against the Rock. The guilt of sin is answered by Christ's blood, the power of sin is conquered by his Spirit, and afflictions that arise are nothing to these. We mistake if we think to do any thing, or to be any thing without Christ, and we mistake if we think any thing too hard to be done or suffered with Him.—(88.)

Their case was not singular, the like afflictions befell their brethren in all parts of the world; all the people of God were their fellow-soldiers in this warfare. The consideration of what others suffer, is proper to encourage us to bear our own share in any affliction; and in whatever form Satan assaults us, or by whatever agents, we may know assuredly that our brethren experience the same conflicts, temptations, and tribulations.

Ver. 10—14. In conclusion, the apostle prays to God, as the God of all grace, the Author and Finisher of every heavenly gift and quality, acknowledging that God, by his word and Spirit, had already called them to be partakers of eternal glory, through Jesus Christ. He prays, not that they might be excused from sufferings, but that their sufferings might be short, and, after they had suffered a while, that God would restore them to a settled and peaceable condition, and perfect his work in them. That he would stablish them against wavering, either in faith or duty; that he would strengthen those who are weak, and settle them firmly upon Christ the foundation.

Perfect implies their progress towards perfection. *Stablish* imports the cur-

ing of our natural lightness and inconsistency, and support against persecutions. *Strengthen* has respect to the growth of graces, especially where weakest and lowest. And *settle* signifies to fix upon a sure foundation, and so may have reference to Him who is the Foundation and Strength of believers. These expressions show what is primarily to be sought after by every christian—perseverance and progress in grace.—(88.)

And as he is the God of pardoning grace, and of sanctifying grace in the beginning and growth of it, so also the God of supporting grace, of that influence without which the graces placed within us would remain dead, and fail us in the time of greatest need. This is the immediate, assisting power, that bears up the soul under the hardest services, and backs it in the sharpest conflicts, communicating strength when we are surcharged. By this a christian learns that his strength is in God, his maintaining his own work in them, against all surrounding enemies and oppositions, advancing them in the midst, and even by the means thereof, and bringing them safe to glory—that perfecting and establishment so affects the apostle in the very entrance of this epistle that there he breaks forth into praise, ch. 1. 3, and here he ends with it, and so encloses all within that Divine circle. Would we search, what innumerable mercies should each of us find.—(88.)

And those who have obtained grace from the God of all grace, should, and will, ascribe glory, dominion, and power to him for ever and ever.

The apostle refers to the design of this epistle,—To testify,—To testify, and in the strongest terms to assure them, that the doctrine of salvation, which he had explained, and they had embraced, was the true account of the grace of God, foretold by the prophets, and published by Jesus Christ. And to exhort them earnestly that, as they had embraced the gospel, they would continue stedfast in it, notwithstanding the arts of seducers, or the persecutions of enemies. The power of these doctrines upon their hearts, and the fruits in their lives, evidenced them to be partakers of the grace of God. The prejudices some might have against Silvanus, as a minister of the gentiles, would soon wear off, when they were convinced that he was a faithful brother.

St. Peter, being at Babylon, sent the salutation of that church, telling the other churches that God had elected or chosen the christians at Babylon out of the world, to partake of eternal salvation through Christ Jesus, with them and all other faithful christians, ch. 1. 2. In this salutation he particularly joins Mark, the evangelist, then with him, who was his son in a spiritual sense, being converted by him to christianity.

The cherishing and increase of christian love, and of affection one to another, is no matter of empty compliment, but the stamp and badge of Jesus Christ upon his followers; unhappy are they, who by any means willingly break it. This peace, which is the portion of those in Christ, is, indeed, within them and with God. But through him it is likewise one with another, and those who are in Christ are the only children and heirs of true peace. Others may have a false peace for a time, and wicked men may wish it to themselves and to one another; but it is a vain hope, and will come to nought. But to wish it to those in Christ has good ground: for all solid peace is founded on Him and flows from Him. Now the peace of God which passeth all understandings, keep your

hearts and minds through Jesus Christ, Amen — (88.)

13 Considerable discussion has arisen as to the place here meant; it probably was the literal Babylon in Assyria—either Seleucia, that is, New Babylon, which was the metropolis of the eastern dispersion of the jews; or Old Babylon, which there is reason to think was not yet totally deserted. But some, and among them, several ancient writers, *Jerome and others*, suppose that by Babylon is figuratively meant Rome. There are many points of resemblance between that queen of cities, and what we conceive of ancient Babylon.—*Bloomfield*.

— The jews were fond of mystical appellations, especially in their captivities. Edom was a frequent title for their heathen oppressors; and as they were first taken captive to Babylon, Rome, the principal scene of their second captivity, which so strongly resembled Babylon in her abominations, idolatries, and persecutions of the saints, may be denominated by the same title.—*Townsend*. It is singular that the romish church contends earnestly for this figurative meaning. See the *Rhemish New Testament*, where they call the protestants "unhonest and partial handlers of God's word," for opposing this view, from which they endeavour to build a proof that Peter was at Rome. *Fulke* fairly remarks, "You are content that Rome be the see of antichrist, so you may have Peter at Rome.—Seeing you will needs have Rome to be Babylon in this place, as in Rev. 16 and 17, you cannot avoid the see of antichrist from the city of Rome, for the Holy Ghost, in the Revelation, speaks not only of the persecution of the heathen emperors, but also of the incitements to false doctrine." &c.

14. See note, Rom. 16. 16.

THE SECOND GENERAL EPISTLE OF PETER.

THE genuineness and authenticity of this epistle are satisfactorily proved, though there has been some discussion on the subject, but it clearly is connected with the first epistle of Peter, both in design and execution, and nothing can be discovered in it unsuitable, either to the apostle or to the age in which he lived. It appears, from ch. 1. 13—15, to have been written when the apostle was advanced in age and near his death, and soon after his first epistle, to confirm the doctrines and instructions he had delivered therein.

1. The apostle having stated the blessings to which God has called christians, exhorts those who had received these precious gifts, to endeavour to improve in graces and virtues, ch. 1. 3—11.

2. They are incited to this from the firmness of true teachers, ver. 12—21, and from the wickedness of false teachers, and the judgments to be inflicted on them, ch. 2.

3. They are grieved against impostors and scoffers, who would ridicule the expectation of Christ's coming, by confuting their false assertions, ch. 3. 1—7, and by showing why that great day was delayed, with a description of its circumstances and consequences, with suitable exhortations to diligence and holiness, ver. 8—14.

4. In conclusion, St. Peter declares the agreement of his doctrine with that of St. Paul, and repeats the sum of the epistle, ver. 15—18.

The holy indignation and vehemence with which the abandoned principles and practices of false teachers and false prophets are exposed, is very remarkable and forcible. The prophetic description of the general conflagration and the end of all earthly things, ch. 3. 8—12, is very awful, and how solemn is the practical inference! Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, ch. 3. 11.

CHAPTER I.

The apostle salutes those who had obtained like precious faith, and reminds them of its attendant blessings, ver. 1—4. They are exhorted to add the exercise of various other graces to their faith, and encouraged thereto, 5—11. He desired to assist them therein, before his approaching decease, 12—15. And confirms the truth of the gospel, relating to Christ's appearing to judgment, as it may be gathered from the immediate testimony which came from heaven, in his own and others' hearing, and was directly proved by the inspired writings of the prophets, 16—21.

Ver. 1—4. The apostle Peter, being moved by the Holy Ghost to write once more to those who from among the jews were turned to faith in Christ, begins with an introduction like the preface to his former letter: but with some additions or alterations. Also, he here styles himself a servant, as well as an apostle of Jesus Christ. To triumph in being Christ's servant, is very proper for those who engage others to enter or abide in the service of Christ.

Faith is alike precious in the private christian and in the apostle; it produces the same precious effects in the one and in the other. Faith unites the weak believer to Christ as really as it does the strong one, and purifies the heart of one as truly as of another; and every sincere believer is by his faith justified in the sight of God, Acts 13. 39. Faith, in whomsoever it is, takes hold of the same precious Saviour, and applies the same precious promises. This precious faith is the gift of God, wrought by the Spirit, who raised Jesus Christ from the dead.

Let us notice the nature of faith. We find it often called a hand, for two reasons. 1. As the hand fastens hold upon the object to which the heart directs it, so faith apprehends Christ with his blessed merits, whereby alone we are saved. 2. As the hand is fittest for working, and executes business which no other member can. So faith worketh godliness, and produces those effects which no other grace in the soul can.—(72 a.)

This faith was "in the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ." They believed and trusted in the obedience unto death of the Lord Jesus, as their incarnate God and Saviour, for their justification, and for all the bless-

ings resulting from it. The faith by which we receive Christ for salvation, is given to us, "through the righteousness" which he finished as our Surety; for it springs from the regeneration of the Holy Spirit, as given to us through his mediation. In behalf of all such christians the apostle prayed, that grace and peace might be multiplied unto them, through the knowledge of God. For according to our believing, spiritual, and experimental knowledge of the perfections of God, as displayed in our Lord Jesus Christ, so will our peace and consolations abound. He is the Saviour of them that believe, and as Surety and Saviour, he wrought out this righteousness in their stead.

All things that have any relation to, and influence upon the life and power of godliness, are from Christ. In him all fulness dwells, and it is from him that we receive, John 1. 16. Instructions, motives, principles, and assistance, together with pardon, peace, grace, and knowledge, had thus been given through the regeneration of the Holy Spirit. Knowledge of God, and faith in him, are the channels whereby all spiritual supports and comforts are freely conveyed to us. All these things had been freely bestowed on them, through his glorious grace and mercy, and the powerful virtue or energy of his quickening Spirit, as the work of the glorious power of God, Eph. 1. 19. It is the glory of God's power to convert sinners; this power or virtue is to be extolled by all that are called out of darkness into marvellous light, 1 Pet. 2. 9.

The same glory and virtue are shown in the promises of the gospel. Those who are, by the Spirit of grace, renewed in the spirit of their mind, are translated into the liberty of the children of God; their understandings, their wills, and affections rendered conformable to the holy nature of God; capable of loving and delighting in him, and finding happiness in his service. It is the world in which corruption reigns; the world lies in wickedness, 1 John 5. 19. And the dominion sin has over us, is according to the delight we have in it. When sinners profess to repent and embrace the gospel, they outwardly relinquish these iniquities, and all regenerate persons escape them, that is, in their allowed and habitual practice.

Let us carefully examine whether our faith is of the like precious nature and efficacy, with that of the primitive servants of Jesus Christ. Thus may we find whether we are certainly interested in the righteousness of our God and Saviour; and grace and peace will be multiplied to us accordingly, until they are perfected in the happiness of heaven. The promises to those who are partakers of a Divine nature, will cause us to inquire whether we really flee from, and escape the corruptions of the world, and are really renewed in the spirit of our minds; and let us turn all these promises into prayers for the transforming and purifying grace of the Holy Spirit, to make us partakers more and more of the image of God, in righteousness, goodness, and truth.

1. "To them that have obtained like precious faith with us in the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ"—*Schoolfield*. In it as the object of faith.

2. The sum of our salvation and religion is to be led to Christ by the Father, who calleth us in the Son.—*Bishops' Bible*.

4. "Whereby he hath given unto us,"—*Schoolfield*.

Ver. 5—11. Those who will make progress in religion, must be very diligent in the use of every appointed means. We must strive, if we will enter in at the strait gate, Luke 13. 24. The believer's way is marked out step by step. A cowardly christian, who is afraid or ashamed to profess the doctrines, or to practise the duties of the gospel, must expect that Christ will be ashamed of him another day. The believer must add knowledge to his virtue, an increasing acquaintance with the whole truth and will of God. Christian prudence regards the persons we have to do with, the place and company we are in. Every believer must labour after the knowledge and wisdom that are profitable to direct. We must add temperance to knowledge; moderation about worldly things; and if we have right understanding and knowledge as to outward comforts, we shall see that their worth is vastly inferior to the value of spiritual mercies. Inordinate desire after any temporal things is inconsistent with earnest desire after God and Christ; and those who take more of these than is due, can render neither to God nor to man what is due to them. Add to temperance, patience, or cheerful submission to the

will of God; for we are born to trouble, and must through many tribulations enter into the kingdom of heaven. This tribulation, Rom. 5. 3, worketh patience, that is, requires the exercise, and occasions the increase of this grace; whereby we bear all calamities and crosses with silence and submission, owning that our sufferings are less than our sins deserve, believing they are no more than we need, and quietly waiting upon God for deliverance. To patience we must add godliness, and this includes the holy affections and dispositions which constitute the true worshipper of God, produced by patience, which works experience, Rom. 5. 4. When christians bear afflictions patiently, they get experimental knowledge of the loving-kindness of their heavenly Father, and hereby they are brought to the child-like fear and reverential love wherein true godliness consists. To which must be added brotherly-kindness, a tender affection to all our fellow-christians, who are children of the same Father, servants of the same Master, members of the same family, travellers to the same country, and heirs of the same inheritance. All the children of men are partakers of the same human nature, are all capable of the same mercies, and liable to the same afflictions; therefore, though upon a spiritual account christians are highly distinguished above those who are without Christ, yet are they to sympathize with others in their calamities, to relieve their necessities, and promote their welfare, both in body and soul. Thus must all believers in Christ evidence that they are the children of God.

To induce an industrious and unwearied pursuit of the before-mentioned graces, the apostle sets forth their advantages. These will bring glory to God, by bringing forth much fruit among men, and thus being fruitful in knowledge, or the acknowledging of our Lord Jesus Christ. Wherever grace abounds, there will be an abounding in good works.

He who has not the beforementioned graces, or does not exercise and improve them, is blind. This present evil world he can see, but has no discerning of the world to come, so as to be affected with heavenly blessings. And those who do not add to their faith the other graces, are as unable to look backward as

forward, their memories do not retain what is past, nor their sight discern what is future. Particular advantages will attend diligence in the work of a christian: 1. Stability in grace, ver. 10. 2. A triumphant entrance into glory, ver. 11. It is the duty of believers to make it clear to themselves that they are chosen of God.

Wherefore let them studiously and earnestly labour to attain unto good assurance in their souls, both of their effectual calling in time, and of their eternal election before all times, by believing and well-doing; if thus carefully endeavouring, it is a firm argument of the grace and mercy of God, so upholding them that they shall not utterly fall.—(34.)

If they diligently practised these things, christians would not fall. Thus it will be plainly manifest whether we are thoroughly converted, our minds enlightened, our wills renewed, and our whole souls changed, as to the bent and inclination thereof; and to come to a fixed certainty in this, requires diligence, and cannot be attained and kept without Divine assistance, as we may learn from *Psa.* 139. 23; *Rom.* 8. 16. By this, believers will be kept from falling, and that even in those hours of temptation which shall be on the earth. They shall be enabled to walk circumspectly, and keep in the way of their duty; and when many fall into errors, they shall be preserved sound in the faith. Those who are diligent in the work of religion, shall have a triumphant entrance into glory, even that everlasting kingdom where Christ reigns, and they shall reign with him for ever and ever. An abundant entrance, as a vessel entering into port from a prosperous voyage, under full sail, with a favorable gale, clear from all impediments, ending all its dangers.

Alas, that the light of many professors is darkness, so that they see nothing but what belongs to their own narrow system, without perceiving the real tendency of the gospel, forgetting they are bound by their profession to mortify all evil and corrupt affections. If we would not be deceived, we must diligently make sure to our souls, by the indisputable fruits of the Spirit, that we are called by special grace. It is not said that if we hold certain doctrines, we shall not fall, but, if we do these things,

we shall never fall; and it is in the practice of every good work we are to expect the entrance to the heavenly kingdom.

5 For this very reason.—*Schoolfield.*

10 Albeit it be sure in itself, forasmuch as God cannot change, yet we must confirm it in ourselves by the fruit of the Spirit, knowing that the purpose of God electeth, calleth, sanctifieth, and justifieth us.—*B shops' Bible.*

Ver. 12—15. St. Peter will not be negligent in any part of his work or charge. We need to be put in mind of what we already know, to prevent our forgetting it, and to improve our knowledge; that we may reduce all to practice. We must be established in the belief of the truth, that we may not be shaken by every wind of doctrine, and especially in the present truth, the truth more peculiarly necessary for us to know in our day; what belongs to our peace, and what is especially opposed in our time. The great doctrines of the gospel, that Jesus is the Christ; that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners; that those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved, and all that believe in God must be careful to maintain good works. These are truths the apostles insisted on in their day; these are faithful sayings, and worthy of all acceptance in every age of the christian church. And as these must be constantly affirmed by ministers, *Tit.* 3. 8, so the people are to be well instructed and established therein. The most advanced christians cannot be above ordinances, or beyond the need of those means which God has appointed and given to us. And as the people need teaching and exhortation while they are in the body, it is very right that ministers should bring the truths to their remembrance which they have formerly heard; to stir them up to be diligent in gospel obedience.

The apostle states, ver. 14, what made him so earnest in this matter, even the knowledge he had, not only that he must certainly, but also that he must shortly put off this tabernacle. The body is but the tabernacle of the soul. It is a mean and moveable structure. We are not to continue long in this earthly house. As at night we put off our clothes, and lay them by, so at death we must put off our bodies. The nearness of death makes the apostle diligent in the business of life. The composure with which the apostle speaks of the painful death that awaited him, may be contrasted

with his terror and denial of his Lord when left to himself. Nothing can tend so to produce composure in the prospect, or in the hour of death, as the consciousness that we have faithfully and simply followed the Lord Jesus, and sought his glory. And the time of his departure was at hand, therefore he bestirs himself with greater zeal and diligence. He must soon be removed from those to whom he wrote, therefore he commits his exhortation to writing. The apostle would have them not only always remember these things, but also converse about them. They who fear the Lord, talk of his loving-kindness. This is the way to spread the knowledge of the Lord; and by the written word of God, they are enabled to do this.

Ver. 16—21. These things are not idle tales, or the contrivance of men, who by cunning craftiness endeavour to deceive. The way of salvation by Christ is the counsel of God, the infinitely wise Jehovah; and preaching was to make these things known. The Preaching of the gospel makes known the power of Christ, that he is able to save to the uttermost all who come to God by him.

The gospel is no weak thing, but comes in power, Rom. 1. 16. The law may set before us our wretched state by sin, but there it leaves us in despair. It discovers our disease, but prescribes no cure. It is the glory and the spectacle of Jesus crucified, in the gospel, that heals the soul, 1 Cor. 1. 18. If there be no feeling of that power, there are no sparks of salvation yet kindled. Let men come with oratory and the enticing words of man's wisdom, those floods do but beat on rocks; but if they come in the power of God, they shall turn those rocks into soft and fleshy hearts. Try to dissuade the covetous worldling from his greediness, one ounce of gold weighs down all reasons. Offer to stay a furious man from anger by arguments, he has not patience to hear them. Try to detain the licentious, one smile is stronger with him than all reason. But come with the gospel, and urge them with the heart blood of Jesus Christ, shed to save their souls from hell, and to satisfy for their sins, and this is that powerful pleading which makes good men confess their hearts burn within them, and bad men, even an Agrippa,

to say they are almost persuaded to be christians, Acts 26. 28 — (72 a.)

These doctrines were not suited to please carnal men, or to procure worldly advantages to those who taught them; but offended all who are not brought to repentance, faith, and holiness; yet they were most satisfactorily authenticated, during our blessed Saviour's abode here on earth, when he was found in fashion as a man: He then manifested himself to be God, particularly when he was transfigured; this Peter, James, and John witnessed. A gracious declaration was then made; This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. God is well pleased with Christ, and with us in him. This is the Messiah who was promised, through whom all who believe in him shall be accepted and saved. This declaration was from God the Fountain of honour, and from heaven the seat of glory. This voice was heard, and understood by Peter, James, and John. Blessed are those who not only hear, but understand; who believe the truth, and feel the power of the voice from heaven, as he did who testified these things. And we have all the reason in the world to receive his testimony. It was heard by them in the holy mount, when they were with Jesus. The place wherein God affords any gracious manifestation of himself, is made holy, during the special presence and gracious influence of the holy and glorious God.

The apostle farther proves the truth and reality of the gospel, ver. 19. For this is foretold by the prophets and penmen of the Old Testament, who spake and wrote under the influence, and according to the direction of the Spirit of God. These from the beginning foretold and described one extraordinary person,—his birth, character, miracles, doctrines, sufferings, death, resurrection, and exaltation. And the evangelists and apostles have written the history of what was before delivered as prophecy. Now the accomplishment of the Old Testament by the New, and the agreement of the New Testament with the Old, are a full demonstration of the truth of both, powerfully supporting and confirming the apostle's doctrine concerning Christ's exaltation and second coming. The Old Testament is called a more sure word of prophecy, than even a voice from heaven. Following prophets confirmed

what had been delivered to former ones, and many prophecies had been already fulfilled by the wonderful providence of God, therefore were more certain to those who received and read the scriptures, than the apostle's account of this voice from heaven. How firm and sure should our faith be, who have such a firm and sure word to rest upon! The apostle encourages to search the scriptures. We do well if we take heed to them; apply our minds to understand the sense, and our hearts to believe the truth of this sure word, to regulate our thoughts and sentiments, our words and confessions, our whole life and conversation by it. Those who would attend to the scriptures to good purpose, must account and use the scripture as a light which God hath sent. The word is a lamp that discovers the way wherein men ought to walk; this is the means whereby we come to know the way of life. They must acknowledge their own darkness. Every man in the world naturally is without the knowledge necessary to attain eternal life. When the light of the scripture is darted into the blind mind and dark understanding, by the Holy Spirit of God, then the spiritual day dawns, and the day-star arises in that soul. This enlightening a dark beighted mind, is like the day-break that advances, and diffuses itself through the whole soul, till it makes perfect day, Prov. 4 18. It is a growing knowledge; and all who do according to truth, come to this light, while evil-doers keep at a distance. They will not rest till the Holy Spirit fully discovers to their souls the glory and excellency of the gospel, and by his sanctifying and comforting influences gives them the dawning of heaven in their hearts, and till the knowledge of Christ, and the experience of his power, truth, and love, gives assurance and anticipation of the happiness of the saints, in the presence of their Saviour, as the perfect day.

All prophecy is of divine original. No scripture prophecy is of private interpretation, or a man's own opinion, but the revelation of the mind of God. This was the difference between the prophets of the Lord, and the false prophets. The prophets and penmen of the scripture spake and wrote what was the mind of God, under the influence and guidance of the Spirit. But though the

scripture is the revelation of the mind and will of God, yet every private man ought to search it, to understand the sense and meaning; and what is contained in it is the mind of God and not of man; this is to be known and owned by all who heed the sure word of prophecy. As a man knows assuredly, that the person is his particular friend, in whom he sees all the distinguishing marks and characters of his friend, so the christian knows that book to be the word of God, in and upon which he sees all the marks and characters of a Divinely-inspired book. He tastes a sweetness, and feels a power, and sees a glory in it truly divine. To call off our minds from all other writings, and apply them to these as the only certain and infallible rule, requires our being fully persuaded that they are Divinely inspired, and contain what is truly the mind and will of God. Also men's imaginations often lead them to suppose events are accomplishments of scripture prophecy which, in fact, have no relation to them; and this way of misapplying them always does mischief, for the prophecies came not in ancient times, at the instance and according to the inclinations of men, nor can they thus be rightly interpreted. We should rest satisfied with understanding such as evidently have been fulfilled, without curiously prying into those which appear hitherto unaccomplished. Thus the abuse of prophecy, and the objections against arguments from it to prove the Divine inspiration of the scriptures would be answered. The prophecies already evidently fulfilled in the person and salvation of Christ, and in the great concerns of the church and the world, form an unanswerable proof of the truth of christianity; these must at last rouse the attention of the most heedless, and silence the cavils of the most sceptical.

Seeing it is so necessary that persons should be fully persuaded of the Divine origin of the scriptures, the apostle, ver. 21, declares that the Old Testament came not by the will of man. Neither the things that are recorded, are the opinions of men, nor was the will of the prophets or penmen of the scriptures, the rule or reason why any of those things were written; For holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. The holy men of God

were employed about that book which we receive as the word of God. If others, destitute of holiness, ever had any of the Spirit of prophecy, yet such persons were not employed to write any part of the scriptures. All the penmen of the scriptures were holy men of God, moved by the Holy Ghost in what they delivered as the mind and will of God. The holy men were but instruments. The Holy Ghost inspired and dictated to them what they were to deliver of the mind of God. He powerfully excited and effectually engaged them to speak and write. He so assisted and directed them in the delivery of what they had received from him, that they were effectually secured from the least mistake in expressing what they revealed. So that the scriptures are to be accounted the words of the Holy Ghost, and all the plainness and simplicity, all the power and all the propriety of the words and expressions are to be regarded by us as proceeding from God. Mix faith therefore with what you find in the scriptures; esteem and reverence the Bible as a book written by holy men, inspired, influenced and assisted by the Holy Ghost. In searching the scriptures, especially in considering the prophecies and their accomplishment, we must beware of self-conceit, an ungovernable fancy, and the influence of selfish passions. Though we have the right to judge for ourselves, yet our judgment should be exercised with sobriety and teachableness, nor is it safe to indulge a fondness for novelty. Above all, we should examine such matters with prayer for the teaching of the Holy Spirit. Under his guidance we shall be kept from interpreting scripture according to our private fancies. We shall discover the close relation of all the prophecies to Christ and his church, in whom they will all be fulfilled to the everlasting glory of his truth, power, love, wisdom, and righteousness, and the eternal joy of all his redeemed people.

16. We declared unto you the things that relate to the Divine authority, power, and glory, in which our Lord Jesus Christ will come to judge the world at the last day.—*Guyse*.

19. Not as though the word of prophecy in itself is more certain than the glorious attestation given to Christ from heaven in the sight and hearing of the apostles; but it was a more certain and indisputable proof of Christ's second appearing with power and great glory. We have the very word of God, speaking by his prophets, to whom all futurity is known, to as-

sure us of the certainty of this future event.—*Guyse*. They stumbled at the descriptions of the majesty of Jesus Christ, and the ineffable glory of his second advent. But if so, they must have denied the proper Deity of Jesus Christ, and consequently the atonement and other fundamental doctrines.—*Bloomfield*.

20. It is not said here that a private man may not interpret the scriptures, but that he may not make an interpretation of his own. By a man's own interpretation is meant that which is made by the will of man without the revelation of God. And in this place is not meant the interpretation of scripture that was before revealed, but the revelation itself, as appears by the next verse.—*Amst*. No prophecy of scripture is of self-interpretation, or its own interpreter, because the scripture prophecies are united in a regular system, all terminating in the establishment of the Messiah's kingdom.—*Horsley*. To understand this in opposition to the right of private judgment in the interpretation of scripture, is foreign to the apostle's purpose, as well as injurious to common sense.—*Doddridge*. As the holy men of old could not speak or write but by the Spirit's inspiration, so neither can we expound what they have written but by the same Spirit's interpretation, 1 Cor. 12. 10. He that expounds the scripture upon the warrant of his own spirit only, doth lay the brands of the fire together without the tongs, and is sure at least to burn his own fingers.—*T. Adams*. A homely but expressive metaphor.

CHAPTER II.

Believers are cautioned against false teachers, who are described by their pernicious principles and influence, ver. 1—3. The certainty of their punishment shown from the examples of the fallen angels, of the old world, and of Sodom and Gomorrah, and that the godly shall escape, as Lot did out of Sodom, 4—9. An account at large of these seducers, as exceedingly wicked, 10—16. But as making high pretences to liberty and purity, 17—22.

Ver. 1—9. As false prophets opposed the holy men of old, and by flattering and deceitful words influenced the rulers and people of Israel, so there would be false teachers in the christian church, who, by like methods, would draw off professors from the holy doctrines taught by the apostles. These would not openly and directly oppose the truth, but by degrees, and under various pretences, they would bring in false doctrines. Although professing to believe that the Lord Jesus redeemed the church with his precious blood, and pretending to consider themselves as bought with that inestimable price, in their conduct they would refuse to obey him. They denied him as their Lord, in whom they professed to hope as their Redeemer. But those who bring in errors destructive to

others, bring swift and sure destruction upon themselves. Though the way of error is a pernicious way, yet we see many are always ready to walk therein. The spread of error will bring an evil report on the way of truth; that is, the way of salvation by Jesus Christ, who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Ignorant persons might conclude that christians in general held such principles, and followed such practices! Let us take care we give no occasion to the enemy to blaspheme the holy name whereby we are called, or to speak evil of that way whereby we hope to be saved.

These seducers use feigned words, they deceive the hearts of their followers. The faithful ministers of Christ, who show men the way of truth, desire the profit and advantage of their followers, that they may be saved; but these seducing teachers desire and design only their own temporal advantage. Such unbelievers, who endeavour to turn others from the faith, are condemned already, and the wrath of God abideth on them. And God's usual method of proceeding is shown by examples. No excellence will exempt a sinner from punishment. The angels are cast down and divested of all their glory and dignity, upon their disobedience. Whoever sins against God, does manifest hurt to himself. There is no place or state between the height of glory and the depth of misery, which they shall be allowed to rest. If creatures sin, even in heaven, they must suffer in hell. Sin is the work of darkness, and darkness is the wages of sin. The darkness of misery and torment follows the darkness of sin. Those who will not walk according to the light and direction of God's law, shall be deprived of the light of God's countenance, and the comforts of his presence. The darkness, which is their misery, keeps them so that they cannot get away from torment. The sinning angels are reserved to the judgment of the great day, though they employ the interval in opposing to the uttermost God's purposes of love to mankind, and in attempting their destruction. But this will all be overruled for the fuller display of God's glory, and the accomplishing his eternal counsels.

Seeing the devil is bound with chains, let us not come within his reach. But as if his chain were not long enough, wicked

men put themselves in his way. When thou art about to commit a voluntary sin, then think, Now I am running within the devil's chain, I durst not so venture within the chain of a lion. Hath God tied him up from me, and shall I run unto him? Let us hate those works which lengthen his chain.—(72 a.)

See how God dealt with the old world, ver. 5. The number of offenders no more procures favour, than their quality. If the sin be universal, the punishment shall likewise extend to all. But, if there be but a few righteous, yet they shall be preserved. God does not destroy the good with the bad. The preachers of righteousness in an age of universal corruption, holding forth the word of life in exemplary conversation, shall be preserved. We also see that God can use those creatures as instruments of his vengeance in punishing sinners, which he at first made and appointed for their service and benefit. He destroyed the whole world by water.

See here also how God dealt with Sodom and Gomorrah, ver. 6. If in a fruitful soil the people shall abound in sin, God can at once turn a fruitful land into barrenness, and a well-watered country into ashes. No political confederacy can keep off judgments from a sinful people. He who keeps fire and water from hurting his people, Isa. 43. 2, can make either of them destroy his enemies; therefore they are never safe. Heinous sins bring most grievous judgments. Those who were abominable in their vices, were remarkable for their plagues. The punishment of sinners is designed for the example of those who come after. Let us be warned by all the instances of God's taking vengeance, which are recorded for our admonition.

When God sends destruction on the ungodly, he commands deliverance for the righteous. Lot is called a just man; this was the prevailing bent of his heart. He had indeed from carnal motives gone to reside in a wicked place, and adhered to the foolish choice he had made, but he was very uneasy there, and his general conduct showed him to be a just man, so that while he was corrected by the loss of his property and the disgrace of his family, he was mercifully preserved in so ensnaring a situation. His example loudly warns us to keep separate from ungodly connexions,

if we would avoid anguish and correction. And though the sinner takes pleasure in wickedness, it is a grief and vexation to the righteous. In bad company we cannot but incur either guilt or grief. Let the sins of others be trouble to us. And, to use the words of *Nisbet*, it is not impossible for the children of the Lord, living among the most profane, to retain their integrity, and to have the Lord's approbation of their disposition and conduct, there being more power in the grace of Christ and his indwelling ~~rather~~, than there is in the temptations of Satan, or the example of the wicked, with all their terrors or allurements. The being accustomed to hear and see wickedness, did not reconcile Lot to it. From this instance we are taught that the deliverance of the godly is the work of God: both his wisdom to direct the way, and his power to work out the deliverance from temptation; to prevent their falling into sin, and their being ruined by their troubles.

In our intentions and inclinations to commit sin, we meet with strange impediments if we mark them. By innumerable means the Lord stops our precipices, and hedges up our ways to sin; that when temptation invites us we may have hands manacled, and feet fettered with detentions. Satan would have us come, but thanks be to God we cannot come. Let us observe that, as when we intend well we often have many provocations to alienate our minds from it, so when we are intending mischief God sends many inconveniences to hinder us, as if to say, Take heed what you do.—(72a.)

When God saves his people from destruction, he delivers over his enemies to deserved ruin. The preservation of impenitent sinners, is only the reserving of them to the day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God. And the specious refinements which seem to many to be the gospel of free grace in especial purity, are in fact damnable heresies, which bring destruction upon numbers. But if we truly fear, trust in, love and endeavour to obey the Lord, in all our conflicts and trials, we may recollect that he knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation, and that he has numberless ways for our deliverance, of which we never have thought. His wisdom and power will surely effect the purposes of his love, and the engage-

ments of his truth; while wicked men often escape suffering here, because they are reserved to the day of judgment, to be punished with the devil and his angels.

1. "Denying Him that redeemed them to be the Sovereign."—*J. P. Smith*. The act of redeeming mankind is in the New Testament exclusively predicated of Christ. The scope of the passage shows that dominion over minds and consciences is intended, which is involved in religious obedience, here required to Christ as our only Sovereign and Lord.—*J. P. Smith*.

4. A general confinement may be reconcilable with some degree of liberty, yet liable to restraint as God shall see fit.—*Huddelidge*.

5. "Noah with seven others."—*Schulefeld*.

8. The sight of sin makes a man either sad or guilty. If we see it and are not sorrowful, we are sinful.—*T. Adams*.

Ver 10—16. Licentious seducers and their abandoned followers, walk after the flesh; they follow the devices and desires of their own hearts, they give up themselves to the conduct of their own fleshly minds. Refusing to bring every thought to the obedience of Christ, they, in their lives, act contrary to God's righteous precepts. They walk after the flesh, they go on in their sinful course, and increase to greater degrees of impurity and licentiousness. They also pour contempt on those whom God has set in authority over them, and requires them to honour.

Good angels are accusers of sinful creatures; they are allowed to behold the face of God, and to stand before his throne, have a zeal for his honour, and accuse and blame those who dishonour him. They bring their accusations of sinful creatures before the Lord; they do not publish their faults, and tell their crimes to their fellow-creatures, in calumny and slander: but it is before the Lord, who is the Judge, and will be the Avenger of all impiety and injustice. Good angels mingle no bitter revilings or base reproaches, with the accusations or charges they bring against the worst criminals. Let us imitate the angels in this; if we complain of wicked men, let it be to God, but with compassion which may show that we belong to him who is meek and merciful.

Ignorance is the cause of evil-speaking; and destruction will be the effect of it; these seducing teachers shall be utterly destroyed in their own corruption; their vices not only expose to the wrath of God in another world, but often

bring to misery and ruin in this life. Such sinners as sport in mischief, deceive themselves, and disgrace all they belong to, indulging in their excesses even in open day, without shame or remorse. Such were spots and blemishes which deformed the christian societies that did not expel them, while they triumphed in their own deceivings, as if they were God's favourites when they were not believers at all. Sins of one kind prepare for others; intemperance in eating and drinking, bring them to commit licentiousness; their looks show their impure lusts, and are directed to kindle the like in others. This they cannot cease from; the heart is insatiate in lusting, and the eye incessant in looking after what may gratify their desires. Those whose hearts are not established with grace, are easily turned into the way of sin. They are not only riotous and licentious, but covetous also. The desire of their souls is to the wealth of this world. If men abandon themselves to their worldly lusts, we cannot wonder they should be called cursed children; for they are liable to the curse of God denounced against ungodly, unrighteous men, and they bring a curse on all who hearken and adhere to them and their ways.

They have forsaken the right way, which is a self-denying way. They have erred and strayed from the way of life, and they have gone over into the path which leads to death, even the way of Balaam. That is a way of unrighteousness, into which men are led by the wages of unrighteousness. Outward temporal good things are the wages sinners expect and promise themselves. The love of riches and honour turned Balaam out of the way of his duty, though he knew the way he took displeased the Lord. Those who, from the same principle, are guilty of the same practices as notorious sinners, shall have their portion with those in another world whom they imitated in this. God sometimes stops them in their way, opens the mouth of conscience, or by providences startles and affrights them. But though extraordinary rebukes may for a little while hinder their progress in the way of sin, they will not make them forsake the way of iniquity, and go over into the way of holiness, or surely the rebuke of Balaam

must have produced this effect. Those who will not yield to usual methods of reproof, will be but little influenced by miraculous appearances. Balaam was restrained from actually cursing the people, but he had so strong a desire after honours and riches, that he did his uttermost to get from under the restraint. None have more cause to tremble than those who are emboldened to gratify their sinful lusts, by presuming on the Divine grace and mercy. Many such there have been, both in ancient and modern times, who speak lightly of the restraints of God's law, and deem themselves freed from all obligations to obey it. Let christians stand at a distance from such characters, and the matters about which they contest, and especially let them fear a licentious profession. Alas, that even unstable souls should be beguiled by such men, and that success should attend their covetous and unholy practices.

13 *Huddridge* considers that it is not to be thought that luxury could be introduced into the feasts which they celebrated with the church, in the love feasts; and refers this feasting with the brethren, to their attending the sacred banquet of the Lord's supper, as a cover for their licentiousness.

14. Full—there is no mediocrity in sin. If the heart of man be not full of God, it seeks to be full of somewhat else.—*T. Adams*

Ver 17—22. The word of truth is the water of life, which refreshes the souls that receive it: but deceivers are set upon spreading and promoting error, and are set forth as empty, because there is no truth in them. All expectations of being fed and filled with knowledge and understanding, by those who are themselves ignorant and empty are in vain. These are clouds which yield no rain, driven with the wind, not of the Spirit, but the stormy wind or tempest of their own ambition and covetousness. As clouds hinder the light of the sun, and darken the air, so do these darken counsel by words without knowledge, wherein there is no truth. Seeing these men promote darkness in this world, it is very just that the mist of darkness should be their portion in the next.

It is just with God to deal thus with them. They allure with high-swelling words of vain boasting; lofty expressions, which have a great sound, but little sense. They work upon the cor-

rupt affections of men, and seduce persons who kept at a distance from those who spread, and those who embraced destructive errors. They are as artful as the fisher at his daily employment. The business of these men is to draw disciples after them, and in their methods and management they suit their baits to those they desire to catch. Persons may be so far deceived, as to fall into errors which they for a while escaped. Be therefore always upon your guard, search the scriptures, pray for the Spirit to instruct and establish you in the truth, walk humbly with God, and watch against every thing which

provoke him, that you may not be taken with the fair and specious pretences of false teachers, who promise not true christian liberty for the service of God, but a licentiousness in sin, to follow the devices and desires of their own hearts. In the midst of all their talk of liberty, these men themselves are the vilest slaves; for their own lusts have gained a complete victory over them, and they are actually in bondage to them, obeying the commands of the flesh. Their minds and hearts are so far corrupted and depraved, that they have neither power nor will to refuse the task imposed on them. The liberty promised by those who are themselves the slaves of evil passions, can be no other than licentiousness. And after any escape from the pollutions of the world, by the knowledge of Christ, so far as convictions and notional faith can reach, if they are again seduced by the false teachers unto their evil practices, and overcome by temptations, so as habitually to indulge in them, their latter end would be far worse than when they sinned in ignorance, as they must have done violence to clearer light and fuller convictions. When men are entangled, they are easily overcome; therefore christians should keep close to the word of God, and watch against all who seek to bewilder them.

A state of apostasy is worse than a state of ignorance; this condemning the way of righteousness, after they have had some knowledge of it, and expressed some liking to it carries in it a declaration as if they had found some iniquity in the way of righteousness, and some falsehood in the word of truth. To bring such an evil report upon the

good way of God, and such a false charge against the way of truth, must expose to the heaviest condemnation. The horrid state of such backsliders is portrayed in strong colours, as resembling two of the most disgusting and loathsome habits, which the whole animal race can supply. And there are indeed many who thus verify these true sayings, but it never shall happen to any who are new creatures in Christ, and made partakers of the Divine nature. Let us then pray continually, Create in us clean hearts, O God, and renew a right spirit within us. A holy commandment is given to us, as well as exceeding great and precious promises; let us beware of turning from the precepts, as much as of rejecting the truths of christianity. Let us equally avoid antinomian corrupters of the gospel, and pharisaical opposers; for both are alike the enemies of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

How dreadful is the state here described! How dangerous when the person has abandoned himself to his old sins! Yet it is not said that it is impossible for him to return to his Maker; though his case is deplorable, it is not utterly hopeless; the leper may be made clean, even the dead may be raised. Is thy backsliding a grief to thee? believe in the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved.—(11.)

18 Some read "a little" or "a little while," others "almost," but whichever reading is followed, the escape seems only to relate to a change of notions, and outward reformation. Escaping from error, and in ver. 20, escaping the pollutions of the world, are the strongest expressions of good, used in the description of these apostates, yet neither these, nor any other, import that they ever were really partakers of special saving grace.—*Cruse*

CHAPTER III.

The design of this epistle is the same with that of the former, to remind of Christ's final coming to judgment, ver. 1, 2. Scoffers at Christ's second coming are to be expected under the gospel state, 3, 4. Their vain and insulting objections against it confuted. He will certainly appear unexpectedly, when the present frame of nature will be dissolved by fire, 5-10. From thence, and from the new state of things then to be introduced, is inferred the necessity of holiness, patience, and stedfastness in the faith, 11-18.

Ver. 1-4. All believers are to remember the words spoken by the holy

prophets, who were Divinely inspired, both enlightened and sanctified by the Holy Ghost; and seeing their own minds are purified by the sanctifying operation of the same Spirit, they are the better disposed to receive and retain what came from God by the holy prophets. Also, the commandments of the apostles of the Lord and Saviour. The disciples and servants of Christ regard what those who are sent by him have declared unto them to be the will of their Lord; what God has spoken by the prophets of the Old Testament, and Christ has commanded by the apostles of the New. Those who meditate on these things, will feel their quickening virtues. By these things the purified minds of christians are to be stirred up, that they may be active and lively in the work of holiness, zealous and unwearied in the way to heaven.

There will be scoffers, men who make a mock of sin, and of salvation from it, by Jesus Christ, and that in the last days, under the gospel. The spirituality and simplicity of the gospel are directly contrary to the carnal mind; therefore christians ought not to be surprised and shaken, as if some strange thing happened unto them. Not only the inward minds of these scoffers are as the mind of every unrenewed sinner, Rom. 8, 7, alienated from God, ignorant of him and averse to him; but they are grown to such wickedness that they scorn to be confined by any laws of God. As they walk in their own way, and talk their own language, so they will think their own thoughts, and form principles altogether their own; here also their own lusts alone will be consulted by them. By this believers shall know them, that they may the better be upon their guard.

They will attempt to shake and unsettle our belief of Christ's second coming. They will scoffingly say, Where is the promise of his coming? ver. 4. Without this, all the other articles of the christian faith will signify very little. The promised Messiah is come, he was made flesh, and dwelt among us; he is such as was foretold, and has done what was promised. These facts are already past, and of them we have the most sure and satisfying evidence. Yet, while one very principal article of our faith refers to what only has a promise to rest upon, scoffers will attack

it, till our Lord is come. They will not themselves believe that he will come; they will laugh at the very mention of his second coming. All things had continued in respect of the returning seasons and all other outward dispensations, such as they had been from the beginning of the world. Because they see no changes, therefore they fear not God, Ps. 55. 19. They neither fear him nor his judgments; what he never has done, they conclude he never can do, or never will do.

Ver. 5—10. The falsehood of the argument of the scoffers is detected. A change has already past, which, in a manner, equals that for which we are called to look, the drowning of the world in the days of Noah. They choose to pass it over in silence. They did not like to retain it in their knowledge. It is hard to persuade men to believe what they are not willing to find true; they are ignorant in many cases, because willing to be ignorant. But such ignorance will not be admitted as an excuse for sin. One sin can be no excuse for another. Had these scoffers considered the dreadful vengeance with which God swept away a whole world of ungodly wretches at once, surely they would not have scoffed at his threatenings of any equally terrible judgment; but they were willingly ignorant. They perversely withdrew their attention from subjects which tended to confute their self-conceited and profligate infidelity. Thus the only wise God, our Saviour, by predicting the scoffs and objections of the infidels and profane, has taken care that even their perverse opposition to the scripture, should furnish additional proof of the Divine inspiration of the Bible. By the word of the Lord, the heavens were, and the earth was, as at the first creation, standing out of the water and in the water. Yet this very arrangement for the welfare of mankind, became the means of their destruction. All the inhabitants of the dry land, all but Noah and they that were with him in the ark, and all the works of men, were entirely destroyed. This change God had before brought upon the world, but which these scoffers overlooked. And now consider what is said of the destructive change yet to come. The heavens and the earth which now are, by

the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire, against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men, ver. 7. This is as certain to come, as the truth and the power of God can make it. Though this seems to be delayed, yet as this wicked world is upheld by the word of God, so it is only reserved for the vengeance of him to whom vengeance belongs. Beware therefore of being among scoffers; never question the coming of the day of the Lord; give diligence to be found in Christ, that the day may be the day of redemption to you, which will be the day of wrath to the ungodly.

Christians are here instructed and established in the truth of the coming of the Lord. Though, in the account of men, there is a vast difference between one day and a thousand years, yet, in the account of God, there is no succession, there is no difference; all things past, present, and future, are ever before him, and the delay of a thousand years cannot be so much to him, as the deferring any thing for a day or for an hour is to us. This is a truth that belongs to our peace, and therefore it may not be hid from our eyes. If men have no knowledge or belief of the eternal God, they will be very apt to think him such a one as themselves. How hard is it to conceive of eternity! It is therefore not easy to attain the knowledge of God, though absolutely necessary.

The Lord is not slack, ver. 9: he does not delay beyond the appointed time; as God kept the time that he had appointed for the delivering Israel out of Egypt, to a day, Exod. 12. 41, so he will keep to the time appointed, in coming to judge the world. What a difference is there between the account which God makes, and that which men make! Believers are apt to think God stays beyond the appointed time, the time they have set for their own and the church's deliverance; but he will not fail to keep the exact day which he has appointed. What men count slackness, is truly long-suffering, and that to us-ward; it is giving more time to his own people, to advance in knowledge and holiness, and in the exercise of faith and patience, to abound in good works, doing and suffering what they are called to, that they may bring glory to God. Repentance is absolutely necessary in order to salvation. A merciful God does not take

pleasure in the punishment of sinners. Abuse not the patience and long-suffering of God, by abandoning yourselves to ungodliness; presume not to go on boldly in the way of sinners, nor sit down securely in an unconverted impenitent state, as he who said, Matt. 24. 48, My Lord delayeth his coming, lest he come and surprise you.

Observe, ver. 10, the certainty of the day of the Lord. Though it is nearly two thousand years since this epistle was written, and the day is not yet come, it assuredly will come. Settle therefore in your hearts that the day of the Lord will certainly come, and you shall certainly be called to give an account of all things done in the body, whether good or evil. And let your humble and diligent walking before God, and frequent judging yourselves, evidence your firm belief of a future judgment, when many live as if they were never to give any account at all. This day will come as a thief in the night, when men are secure, and have no expectation of the day of the Lord. Let us then beware how we in our thoughts and imaginations put that day away from us; but rather suppose it to be nearer, as we see it further off in the opinion of the ungodly world. The visible heavens, as unable to abide when the Lord shall come in his glory, shall pass away; they shall undergo a mighty alteration, a fire shall go before him, the earth, its inhabitants, and all the works, whether of nature or art, shall be destroyed. The stately palaces and gardens, and all the desirable things wherein worldly-minded men seek and place their happiness, all shall be burned up; all sorts of creatures which God has made, and all the works of men, must pass through the fire, which shall be a consuming fire to all that sin has brought into the world, though it may be a refining fire to the works of God's hand. Imagination itself is baffled, description would be vain, we can only apply the inconceivable subject to practical purposes. Who cannot observe what a difference there will be between the first coming of Christ and the second! If that is called the great and dreadful day of the Lord. Mal. 4. 5, how much more dreadful must the coming to judgment be! May we be so wise as to prepare for it, that it may not be a day of vengeance and destruction unto us! What

will become of us, if we set our affections on this earth, and make it our portion, seeing all these things shall be burnt up? Therefore make sure of happiness beyond this visible world.

5—7. If we translate "between the waters," it will bear some resemblance to Gen. 1. 6, 7, and it may refer to the whole of the atmosphere with which the earth is surrounded, and which contains the vapours without which we could neither have animal nor vegetative life. Thus the earth which was originally formed out of water, subsists by water, and by means of that very water, the water compacted with the earth—the fountains of the great deep and the waters of the atmosphere, Gen. 7. 11, the antediluvian world was destroyed. But though the same means still exist, for there is water enough to crown the earth, and there is iniquity enough to induce God to destroy it and its inhabitants, it is nevertheless treasured up, reserved to be destroyed, not by water, but by fire, at the day of judgment.—*A Clarke* The tradition of the heathens, doubtless in accordance with the Divine declaration, was that the world would be destroyed by fire.

8. *Gill* says, Here seems to be reference either to Ps. 90. 4, or to a common saying among the Jews founded on the same passage, "The day of the blessed God is a thousand years," suggesting that though thirty years had elapsed since the promise was given out that Christ would come again, yet should 1,000 or 2,000 years elapse before his coming, this would be no objection to the accomplishment of the promise, for though such a number of years is very considerable among men, yet not with God. He also states that the Jews interpreted days of millenniums, and reckoned millenniums by days, and used that phrase in confirmation of it.

10. The fire shall extend to the changing, not to the annihilation of the earth. The surface of it shall be purged, and so deep as the corruption of sin entered, shall this flame reach; indeed the works that are on the earth shall suffer more to their corruption. The earth shall be burnt, but not as hardening the clay, nor as we burn wood or coals by consuming them to ashes; but like metal in a furnace, or gold in a crucible, which, by separation of the dross, is brought to perfect purity.—*T. Adams*.

Ver. 11—14. From the doctrine of Christ's second coming, we are exhorted to purity and godliness. All the truths revealed in scripture, should be improved for our advancement in practical godliness. This is the effect that real knowledge must produce. If the sin of man has brought the earth under a curse, from which it cannot be freed without being dissolved, what an abominable evil is sin, and how much to be hated. A very exact and universal holiness is enjoined, not resting in any low measure or degree. To be holy in God's house and in our own; holy in our worshipping of God, and in our conversing with men; devoting ourselves to the service

of God, and designing the glorifying and enjoyment of God, who endures for ever: whereas what worldly men delight in must pass away; let us look therefore at what shall abide, which, though it be not present, is certain and not far off. This looking for the day of God, is one of the directions the apostle gives us, in order to our being eminently holy and godly in all manner of conversation. The first coming of our Lord Jesus Christ was what the people of God earnestly waited and looked for; that coming was for the consolation of Israel, Luke 2. 25. How much more should they wait with expectation and earnestness for his second coming, which will be the day of their complete redemption, and of his most glorious manifestation! Then he will be admired in his saints, and glorified in all them that believe.

True Christians look for new heavens and a new earth: freed from the vanity to which the present are subject, and the sin they are polluted with, where only righteousness shall dwell. Those only who are clothed with the righteousness of Christ, and sanctified by the Holy Ghost, shall be admitted to dwell in this holy place. The ground and foundation of this expectation and hope is the promise of God. He is faithful, who has promised. Raise and regulate your expectations of all the great things that are to come according to the word of God: and as to the new heaven and new earth, look for them, as God has directed. Seeing you expect the day of God, when our Lord Jesus Christ will appear in his glorious majesty, and these heavens and earth shall be dissolved, and purified, and refined, prepare to meet him. It concerns you to see in what state you will be when the Judge of all men comes to determine how it shall be with them to all eternity; therefore see that you are found of him in a state of peace and reconciliation. All that are out of Christ are in a state of enmity, and oppose the Lord and his Anointed, and shall be punished with destruction from the presence of the Lord. Those whose sins are pardoned, and their peace made with God, are the only safe and happy people; therefore follow after peace, and that with all; Peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: peace in our own consciences, through the Spirit of

grace, witnessing with our spirits that we are the children of God: peace with men, having a calm and peaceable disposition wrought in us, resembling that of our blessed Lord. That ye be found of Christ without spot, and blameless; follow after holiness as well as peace. Never expect to be found at that day of God in peace, if you are lazy and idle in this your day, in which we must finish the work that is given us to do. Only the diligent christian will be the happy christian in the day of the Lord. Our Lord will suddenly come to us, or shortly call us to him; and would you have him find you idle?

12. "Hasting on."—*Schleusfeld*

13. In some scriptures, "new heavens and a new earth," seem figuratively to describe the most prosperous and peaceful days of the church on earth. Yet here the state of the righteous after the day of judgment, and the dissolution of this present world, are evidently intended, but what is meant, in various particulars, the following alone can fully explain.—*T. Scott*

—The apostle does not here lead believers to expect any worldly or temporal felicity; he saith it is a state promised after the day of judgment, as fully satisfactory to believers, where no sin, but only righteousness, shall have its instant reward; which cannot agree to any earthly happiness, but must be understood of everlasting blessedness, set forth under these expressions—blessedness to set forth somewhat of the glory of that state which cannot be fully set forth.—*Veset*

—I wish that our minds might stay in this generality of the renovation of the world, and not curiously to seek what parts of the world shall be restored, and what shall not, or how all things shall be restored. For if to have foreknown the things would have made much to godliness, surely the Holy Ghost would most plainly have told them; for, according to Christ's promise, he brings this into all truth the knowledge of which would profit us.—*J. Bradford.*

Ver. 15—18. As an inducement to be diligent, account the long-suffering of our Lord to be salvation. Does your Lord delay his coming? do not think this is to give more time to make provision for lusts, to gratify them, but that men may have time to prepare for eternity. Learn then to make a right use of the patience of our Lord, who as yet delays his coming. And, as it is difficult to prevent men's abuse of God's patience, this apostle refers to St. Paul as directing men to make the same good use of the Divine forbearance.

What an honourable mention does this apostle make of that very man who had openly reproved him, Gal. 2. 11. He calls him brother. Though many se-

ducing teachers denied St. Paul's apostleship, yet St. Peter owns him to be an apostle. He calls him beloved; they were united in the same service of the same Lord, united in affection, mutually desirous of and rejoicing in each other's success. He mentions St. Paul as a person of eminent knowledge in the mysteries of the gospel. How desirable is it, that those who preach the same gospel, should treat one another according to the pattern St. Peter here sets them! Observe that the excellent wisdom which was in St. Paul, was given him. The understanding and knowledge that qualify ministers to preach the gospel, are the gift of God; but they must seek for this knowledge, and labour to get this understanding. He endeavours to lead others as far as he himself was led into the knowledge of the mysteries of the gospel. He does not fail to declare the whole counsel of God. Acts 20. 27.

The epistles written by the apostle of the gentiles, and directed to those gentiles who believed in Christ, were also designed for the instruction and edification of those jews who were brought to believe in Christ. The apostolic epistles, though written to particular churches or persons, evidently were for general instruction. And the apostle Peter proceeds to tell us, that in the things to be met with in St. Paul's epistles, there are some things hard to be understood, namely, such as related to the deep dispensations of God's government, and the sovereignty of his grace. Such subjects could not be properly understood, excepting by those who had come to some maturity in knowledge, grace, and experience, and who received them in humble and simple faith and love.

It is justly remarked, that the difficulty is said to affect chiefly unteachable and unsteady men, whose prejudices indispose them for admitting the truth, or whose levity prevents due solicitude to retain it: but not persons of humble, teachable minds, resolute in pursuing and maintaining the truth; and the remedy is, not to lay aside the scriptures on this account, but to be concerned to grow in grace.—(80.)

Here the unlearned and the unstable, such as are untaught in the school of Christ, or are unteachable through pride or prejudice, or carnal passions, make wretched work; for they wrest and

torture the scriptures, perverting them to make them speak what the Holy Ghost does not intend. Where there is Divine power to establish, as well as to instruct men in Divine truth, persons are secured from falling into errors. How great a blessing this is, we learn from the pernicious errors that ignorant and unstable men fall into, even to their destruction. Errors concerning the holiness and justice of God are the utter ruin of multitudes of men. Let us therefore earnestly pray for the Spirit of God to instruct us in the truth, that we may know it as it is in Jesus, that we may stand firm and unshaken in the most stormy times, when others are tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine.

The perversion of St. Paul's writings must not be charged on any thing in the epistles, but on those who thus perverted them, for they wrested the other scriptures also. Proud, carnal, and licentious men seek to wrest some things in them into a seeming agreement with their pernicious doctrines. But this is no reason why St. Paul's epistles, or any other part of the scriptures, should be laid aside; for men, left to themselves, pervert every gift of God. Then let us seek to have our minds prepared for receiving things hard to be understood, by reducing to practice those things which are more easy to be understood. But there must be self-denial and suspicion of ourselves, and submitting to the authority of Christ, Jesus our great Prophet, before we can heartily receive all the truths of the gospel, therefore we are in great danger of rejecting the truth. And whatever opinions and thoughts of men are not conformable to the law of God, and warranted by it, the believer disclaims and abhors. These are the conceits and counsels of the ungodly, who have forsaken God's law; and if we imbibe their opinions, we shall soon imitate their practices. Those who are led away by error fall from their own steadfastness. They know not where to rest, but are at the greatest uncertainty. It nearly concerns us to be upon our guard, seeing the danger is so great. And that we may avoid being led away, we must seek to grow in all grace, in faith, and virtue, and knowledge. By how much the stronger grace is in us, by so much the more steadfast shall we be in the truth.

Christ persevered for us, and shall not we persevere for him? in him? to him? He was a Friend indeed, for he loved to the last. There was no beginning of his love, and there can be no ending. Much he endured, and that long, even to the last gasp. His love to our souls triumphed over the love of his own life. He foresaw all before he suffered, and while he foresaw he suffered. He saw sin in all its foulness, he hated it with all extremeness, yet he persevered to the death that he might save us. He never fell from us; we are basely unthankful if we fall from him. The reward of our service is eternal, why should not our services be constant?—(72 a)

We must grow in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. Labour to know him more clearly and more fully, to know more of Christ, and to know him to better purpose, so as to be more like him, and to love him better. This is the knowledge of Christ, which the apostle Paul reached after, and desired to attain to, Phil. 3. 10. Such knowledge of Christ as conforms us more to him, and endears him more to us, must be of the greatest use to preserve us from falling off in times of general apostasy, and those who experience this effect of the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, will, upon receiving such grace from him, give thanks and praise him, and join in ascribing glory to him now, in the full assurance of doing the same for ever. Amen.

16. Of this wresting the scriptures, those commonly are most guilty, who, from the pride of understanding, will receive nothing but what they can explain. Whereas the humble and teachable receive the declarations of revelation, according to their plain, grammatical, unconstrained meaning, which it is their only care to attain, by reading the scriptures frequently and with attention.—*Macknight*.

— The expression, *wrest or torture* as on the sack, plainly implies that violence is done by these bad men to some passages of scripture, to make them speak an unnatural sense, which may answer their own purposes. And truly he must know little of the history of theological controversies, who has not observed many deplorable instances of this.—*Doddridge*.

— "In which things are some matters."—*Schalefield*. Unlearned, does not here mean illiterate in the common sense of the word.

18. This doxology belongs with undeniably clearness to the Lord Jesus Christ. It is an act of devotion, ascribing to the Saviour that honour, which reason and scripture example show to be properly attributed only to the Divine Majesty.—*J. P. Smith*.

THE FIRST GENERAL EPISTLE OF JOHN.

This epistle unquestionably is a genuine production of the apostle John, both from the uniform evidence of the ancient fathers, and the close analogy of the sentiments and expressions with those of his gospel. The date has been much controverted, but the most probable opinion seems to be, that it was written about A. D. 68, and that it was intended for the use of christians of every nation and country. Though called an epistle, it is not written in an epistolary form, but is a didactic discourse upon the principles of christianity, in doctrine and practice. The design appears to be, 1. To refute and guard against erroneous and licentious tenets, principles, and practices, such as the denial of the real Godhead, and the proper human nature of Christ, of the reality and efficacy of his sufferings and death as an atoning sacrifice, and also the assertion that believers, being saved by grace, were not required to obey the commandments. These principles began to appear in the church even in the apostolic age. 2. To stir up all who profess to know God, to have communion with him, and to believe in him, that they walk in light and not in darkness, in holiness, not in sin, showing the utter insufficiency of a mere outward profession without the accompanying evidence of a holy life and conduct. 3. To help forward and to excite real christians to communion with God and the Lord Jesus Christ, to constancy in the true faith and to purity of life.

T. H. Horne presents the leading divisions as follows. Section 1, asserts the true Divinity and humanity of Christ, in opposition to the false teachers, and urges the union of faith and holiness of life, as necessary to enable christians to enjoy communion with God, ch. 1. 1—7.

2. Shows that all have sinned, and explains the doctrine of Christ's propitiation, ch. 1. 8 to 2. 2, whence the apostle illustrates the marks of true faith, obeying the commandments, and sincere love of the brethren, and shows that the love of the world is inconsistent with the love of God, ch. 2. 3—17.

3. Asserts Jesus to be the same person with Christ, in opposition to the false teachers who denied it, 18—29.

4. On the privileges of true believers, their happiness and duties, and the marks by which they are known to be sons of God, ch. 3.

5. A mark to know one sort of antichrist—the not confessing that Christ came in the flesh, ch. 4. 1—3. Also marks for distinguishing false christians, as, love of the world, ver. 4—6. Want of brotherly love, ver. 7—12. Denying Christ to be the true Son of God, ver. 13—15. And a recommendation of brotherly love, from the consideration of the love of God in giving his Son for sinners, ver. 16—21.

6. Shows the connexion between faith in Christ, regeneration, love to God and his children obedience to his commandments, and victory over the world; and that Jesus Christ is truly the Son of God, able to save us, and to hear the prayers we make for ourselves and others, ch. 5. 1—16.

The conclusion, in a summary of the whole, shows that a sinful life is inconsistent with true christianity; asserts the Divinity of Christ; and cautions believers against idolatry, ver. 17—21.

This epistle especially contains marks by which christians may soberly examine themselves, whether they are in the faith. An affectionate spirit pervades the whole, not excepting those passages where the apostle exposes and reprehends false teachers.

J. P. Smith shows that the commencing paragraph of the first epistle of John contains very plain recognitions of the pre-existent state, and the Divine nature of the Messiah, coinciding with the declarations of the gospel by the same apostle. He also points out other expressions in these epistles referring to a Divine nature in the Person of the Messiah. (1.) Obedience to his commandments as those of the One Supreme Lawgiver, see ch. 2. 3—6; 3. 22; 5. 2, 3. (2.) Expressions occur which strongly imply that the Saviour's existence among men was an act of condescension from a previous state, ch. 4. 2; 3. 8; 4. 9, 10, 14. 2 ep. 7. (3.) That Christ and the Father are one, in nature, perfections, and honour, ch. 2. 22, 23. (4.) That our holy and happy union with the True One is, in fact, our union, by the living principle of religion, with the Saviour himself, ch. 6. 19, 20.

The epistle is suited to refute and expose many heretical sentiments, both of ancient and modern times, and in this view is highly valuable and interesting.

The uniform tone of reverential awe in which the person of our blessed Redeemer is alluded to throughout the apostolic epistles, is a circumstance which those persons who are disposed to object to the doctrine of his Divine nature should seriously consider. The intimacy of friendship to which the disciples of our Lord were admitted appears not, for a moment, to have trenchanted upon their reverential adoration of him. Above all, we find that sentiment most strongly marked in the writings of the beloved apostle, St. John. The unequivocal assertions of our blessed Saviour's Divinity contained in his epistles and his gospel, afford some of the strongest scriptural proofs of that important doctrine. But that such an impression should have taken complete hold of a mind which had been permitted to trace the object of its reverence through the humble incidents and detail of private life, can be accounted for only from the evidence confirmatory of that impression, having been of too decided a character to be shaken by even that critical and perilous test. Certain it is that no misgivings, or interventions of doubt upon this subject, ever seem for one instant to be suggested to that apostle's mind.—*Shuttleworth.*

CHAPTER I.

The apostle prefaces his epistle to believers in general, with evident testimonies to Christ, for promoting their happiness and joy, ver. 1-4. The necessity of a life of holiness, in order to communion with God is shown, and they are relieved under a sense of indwelling sin, which they are humbly to acknowledge remains with them; but from which there is an all-cleansing virtue in the blood of Jesus, 6-10.

Ver. 1-4. That essential Good, that uncreated Excellence, which had been from the beginning, from eternity, as coequal and coeternal with the Father, and which had at length appeared in human nature for the salvation of sinners, was the great subject concerning which the apostle wrote to his brethren. This Good, which from the beginning was with God, and was God. by whom all things were created; had become flesh to dwell on earth among men. The apostle and his brethren had heard Him declare his doctrine and his salvation. They had seen him while they beheld his glory, full of grace and truth. They had witnessed his wisdom and holiness, his miracles, and love and mercy, during some years, till they saw him crucified for sinners, and afterwards risen from the dead. They had touched him, so as to have full proof of his resurrection.

This Divine Person, the Word of life, the Word of God, appeared in human nature, that he might be the Life of men. The apostle wrote to assure his brethren of the reality of Christ's human nature, and also of his Divine nature, which his resurrection fully proved. And the apostles were chosen to be his attendants, that they might bear witness to these things, and to the eternal Life which had always subsisted with the Father, as one with Him yet distinct from him; and who in the fulness of time was manifested as the Author and Giver of eternal life to sinners, through the redemption of his blood, and the communication of his new-creating Spirit.

The apostles declared what they had seen and heard, not from any selfish or carnal motives, but from the purest benevolence and love, that believers might share their comforts and everlasting advantages. They had free access to God the Father. Their souls being united to him, through Christ Jesus, and by the

power of the Holy Spirit, a most honourable and happy intercourse was carried on, while they made Him their hope and confidence, and aimed to do his will. He supplied them with wisdom and strength suited to their wants, and imparted holy consolations. This was by their fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ, by continued reliance on whom, as the life and salvation of their souls, they had acceptance with God as their Father. They had a happy experience of it in their souls, and evidenced its excellence in their lives. See whither the gospel revelation tends—to advance us far above sin and earth, and to carry us to blessed communion with the Father and the Son. See for what end the eternal Life was made flesh—that he might advance us to eternal life in communion with the Father and himself. See how far they live beneath the dignity, use, and end of the christian faith and institution, who have not spiritual communion with the Father, and the Son Jesus Christ.

The apostles desired that believers might be advanced in holy joy. It should fill us with joy that the eternal Son has come to seek and save us; that he made full atonement for our sins: that he conquered sin and death and hell: that he lives as our Intercessor and Advocate with the Father; and that he will come again, to perfect and glorify his persevering believers. Believers should rejoice in their happy relation to God, as his beloved and adopted; in the pardon of their sins, in the sanctification of their natures, in the prospect of grace and glory. Were they confirmed in their holy faith, how would they rejoice! This communion of believers with the Father and the Son, is effected and maintained by the influences of the Holy Spirit. And what words can fully express the Divine love in causing the eternal Life to be manifested, that condemned rebels, dead in sin, might live by Him. The benefits Christ bestows are not like the scanty possessions of the world, inspiring jealousies in others; but the joy and happiness of communion with God is infinite and all-sufficient, so that any multitude may partake of it; and all who are warranted to say that truly their fellowship is with the Father, will desire to bring others to partake of the same blessedness, that their own joy may be full.

1-3. J. P. Smith shows that the expression

"from the beginning" can be attached only to the first term in the series, and submits the following as an attempt at a very close version: "With respect to the Word of Life, (for indeed the Life has been manifested, and we have seen [it] and bear witness [to it], and we announce to you that Eternal Life which was with the Father, and has been manifested to us;) we announce to you Him who was from the beginning, whom we have heard, whom we have with our eyes beheld, whom we have gazed upon, and our hands have touched; in order that ye also may have a communion [of blessings] with us; and indeed ours [is] the communion with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ." The particulars here predicated of the Messiah are these: 1. That he is the Word of Life, the Life and the Eternal Life. 2. That he was from the beginning. 3. That he was with the Father. 4. That he is, equally with the Father, the Source of spiritual and heavenly blessings. 5. That he thus existed, before he was made an object of sensible perception. 6. That after this, he assumed the nature and properties of the human race. The conformity of the terms with those in the introduction to the Gospel is undeniable.

2. It has been well remarked that the heresy which stood most conspicuous in the age of the apostles was that which denied not the *Divine* but the *human* nature of the Redeemer. And so far from being called upon to prove him to be very God, a point universally acknowledged, the great difficulty seems to have been to convince the first polluters of the Christian faith, that he was also, really and actually, very man. It was not until after the lapse of time had subdued by distance the astounding effect produced by his miraculous career upon earth, that human nakedity dared to speak of him as a merely mortal preacher, or even as the most glorious of created beings. — *Shuttleworth*.

3. The effect of the gospel is that we all, being joined together in Christ by faith, should be the joint of God. — *Bishops' Bible*.

Ver. 5—10. What was communicated to the apostles they were solicitous to impart. A message from the Lord Jesus, the Word of life, the eternal Word, we should all gladly receive: and the present one relates to the God whom we are to serve, and with whom we should seek communion—That God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. God is all that beauty and perfection which can be represented to us by light. He is purity, wisdom, holiness, and glory. There is no defect, nothing contrary to absolute excellence, no changeableness or decay in him. This report comprehends the holiness of God, the absolute purity of his nature and will; his knowledge, his justice. It is meet that to this dark world the great God should be represented as pure and perfect light. And it is the Lord Jesus who best opens to us the name and nature of the unsearchable God. The only Begotten, that is in the bosom of the

Father, the same hath declared him. What more could be concluded in one word than in this, God is Light, and in him is no darkness at all? As this is the nature of God, his doctrines and precepts must be similar. And as his perfect happiness cannot be separated from his perfect holiness, so our happiness must be proportioned to our sanctification.

Then observe. 1. For the conviction of such professors as have no true fellowship with God; If we say we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth. To walk in darkness, is to live and act contrary to religion. Some may pretend to great attainments and enjoyments in religion; and yet their lives may be irreligious and immoral. Such belie God, for he holds no heavenly fellowship or intercourse with unholy souls. What communion hath light with darkness? They lie concerning themselves; for there is no truth in their profession; their practice demonstrates its folly and falsehood. 2. For the satisfaction of those near to God; if the professed disciples of Christ walked in the light, acting as those who knew God, and his holy will, this was evidence that they were partakers of Christ, admitted to the communion of the saints, entitled to their privileges and blessings. They might also be fully assured that the atoning blood of the Son of God had taken away the guilt of all their former sins, and removed their daily defects; and the Holy Spirit, as given through his atonement, was cleansing away, and would at length perfectly destroy all the sinfulness of their fallen nature. The eternal Life, the eternal Son, hath put on flesh and blood, and died to wash us from our sins in his own blood, and procures for us those sacred influences by which sin is to be subdued more and more, till it is quite abolished, Gal. 3. 13, 14.

While the necessity of a holy walk is insisted upon, as the effect and evidence of the knowledge of God in Christ Jesus, the opposite error of self-righteous pride is guarded against with equal care, ver. 8. We must beware of self-deceit. We must beware of deceiving ourselves in denying or excusing our sins. If we deny them, the truth is not in us. All those who walk most near to God, in holiness and

righteousness, are most sensible that their best days and duties are mixed with sin, and need cleansing with the atoning blood. The christian life is a life of continual repentance, humiliation for, and mortification of sin; of continual faith in, thankfulness for, and love to the Redeemer, and hopeful joyful expectation of a day of glorious redemption, which the believer shall be fully and finally acquitted, and sin be abolished for ever. The denial of our sin not only deceives ourselves, but dishonours God. The believer is taught the way to the continued pardon of his sin, ver. 9, confession and humble acknowledgment of sin before God, who is faithful to his covenant and word. He has provided a Sacrifice by which his righteousness is declared in the justification of sinners. He has promised his Son, that those who come through him shall be forgiven on his account. He is gracious, and will forgive the believer sorrowing for sin, cleanse him from the guilt of all unrighteousness, and deliver him from the power and practice of it. God has given testimony to the continued sin and sinfulness of the world, by providing a sufficient effectual Sacrifice for sin, that will be needed in all ages; and to the continued sinfulness of believers themselves, by requiring them continually to confess their sins, and apply themselves by faith to the blood of that Sacrifice. Therefore, if we say that we have not sinned, or do not sin, the word of God is not in us by faith, nor the teaching of the Holy Spirit; neither in our minds, as to the acquaintance we should have with it, nor in our hearts, as to the practical influence it should have upon us. Let us then learn to plead guilty before God, be humbled, and willing to know the worst of our case. Let us honestly confess all our sins and their aggravations, relying wholly on his mercy and truth through the righteousness of Christ, for a full and free forgiveness. Let us trust in Him and wait on Him, to cleanse us from all unrighteousness, until no more remains in us.

5. Darkness implies all imperfection, principally ignorance, sinfulness, and misery. Light is the purest, the most penetrating, the most useful, and the most diffusive of all God's creatures; it is therefore a very proper emblem of the purity, perfection, and goodness of the Divine nature. God is to human souls what the light is to the world.—*A. Clarke.*

— The expressions used here and in the gospel of St John, Word, life, light, and others show that the apostle had in view the philosophy of the gnostics, who used, or rather abused, those expressions as technical terms of their philosophy — *T. H. Horne.*

CHAPTER II.

The apostle directs believers, to the advocacy and atonement of Christ for help and relief against sinful infirmities, ver. 1, 2. The effects of a saving knowledge of, and union with him, as productive of obedience and love to the brethren described, 3—11. Christians addressed under the various characters of little children, young men, and fathers, 12—14. All are cautioned against inordinate love of this world, and anti-christian errors, 15—23. They are encouraged to stand fast in the faith and holiness of the gospel, according to the spiritual unction they received, 24—29.

Ver. 1, 2. The apostle's design was to keep believers from committing sin; as the doctrine of salvation by Christ displayed the malignant nature and effects of sin, taught men to hate, dread, and flee from it, and led them to the love of God and holiness, giving effectual encouragement and motives to repentance. And, from the sinner's first conviction of guilt, to the end of the christian's warfare by death, the general rule is applicable, that if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, one who has undertaken and is fully qualified and authorized, to plead in behalf of every one who applies for pardon, salvation, and all pertaining thereto, in his name, and depending on his intercession. He is "Jesus," the Saviour, the incarnate Son of God; and "Christ," the Messiah, the Anointed, chosen, and consecrated to his office. And he alone is "the Righteous One," who received his nature pure from sin, and as our Surety perfectly obeyed the law of God, and so fulfilled a righteousness more valuable in itself, and more honourable to the Father, than that of all mere creatures could have been.

Christ, by his sufferings and death, and intercession, rendered a holy and righteous God propitious to sinners, so that he waits to be gracious. Sinners all over the whole earth are admitted to share these benefits. All men, in every land, and through successive generations, are invited to come to God through this all-sufficient atonement, and by this

new and living way. All who accept this invitation are as much interested in Christ, and all his purchased blessings, as if he had died upon the cross for each of them alone. Thus there is most abundant encouragement to every one who hears the gospel, to repent, and seek salvation by faith in the blood of Christ, but none to any who continue impenitent and unbelieving. Thus the gospel, when rightly understood and received, sets the heart against all sin, and prevents the allowed practice of it; at the same time it gives most blessed relief to the wounded consciences of those who have sinned, and this by the hope of pardon through our Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and his all-sufficient propitiation.

2 The apostle's reasoning stands thus—He who must be an Advocate, must first of all be a reconciliation for us: now, no saints can be a reconciliation for us; therefore no saints can be advocates.—*Perkins*.

— The apostle is to be understood as speaking only of all those who believe, whether Jews or gentiles, over the whole world.—*Doddridge*.

Ver. 3—11. Here is the evidence of the soundness of our knowledge, if it constrains us to keep God's commands; therefore he that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him, ver. 4. The knowledge of Christ evidently signifies a believing, spiritual, and experimental acquaintance with him, and a cordial acceptance of his salvation. What knowledge of God can that be, which sees not that he is most worthy of the most entire obedience? And a disobedient life is the confutation and shame of pretended religious knowledge; it shows there is neither religion nor honesty in the professor.

The love of God is perfected in him that keeps his commandments, ver. 5. God's grace in him attains to its true mark, and produces its sovereign effect as far as may be in this world, which is man's regeneration; though it never is in the degree of absolute perfection. In the spiritual state of our souls we subsist in his communion, and being united to Christ by faith, we live by his Spirit.—(16)

We are chosen, to be holy and blameless before Christ in love; we are pardoned and justified, that we may partake of the Divine Spirit; we are sanctified,

that we may walk in ways of holiness and obedience. Light is to kindle love; and love must and will keep the word of God. It inquires wherein the Beloved may be pleased and served; and by this dutiful attendance to the will of God, we know that we are united to him by that Spirit, which raises us to this obedience. The Lord Christ, when an inhabitant of this world, gave a shining example of absolute obedience to God; those who profess to be his must walk after his pattern and example, with continual application to his atoning blood for pardon and acceptance, and constant dependence on the Holy Spirit to enable them to follow it. And this observance of Christ's commands, though far from real perfection, has holiness and excellency which, if universal, would make the earth resemble heaven itself.

This was no new command. It had been in force from the beginning of the world; but it might be called a new command as given to Christians. This was true in respect of their Lord and Saviour, as he had newly shown his love to sinners, and had laid them under new obligations to obey and imitate him. It was also true in them, as their situation was new in respect of its motives, rules, and obligations, from the change that had taken place, as the darkness of the preparatory dispensation was past, and the true Light then shone in full splendour. And those who walk in hatred and enmity towards the Christian brethren, cannot be swayed by the sense of the love of Christ, and therefore remain in a dark state. He who is influenced by such love, approves his light to be good and genuine. He discerns the weight and value of the Christian redemption; he sees how meet it is that we should love those whom Christ hath loved; and he will conscientiously beware that he neither induce his brother to sin, nor turn him out of the way of religion. Christian love teaches us to value our brother's soul, and to dread every thing injurious to his purity and peace. Hatred is a sign of spiritual darkness, ver. 11. The darkness of unregeneracy is contrary to the light of life; where that darkness dwells, the mind, the judgment, and the conscience will be darkened, and will mistake the way to heavenly endless life, till the sinner falls into some condemning

heresy, or scandalous crime, ruining himself, and perhaps others also. These things demand serious self-examination; and should lead us earnestly to pray that God would show us what we are, and whither we are going.

3—6. Or, By this we know that we rightly regard Him, if we keep his commandments. He who saith, "I rightly regard Him," and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth his word, truly in him the love of God is accomplished. By this we know that we are in Him. He who saith that he abideth in Him, ought, himself also so to act, even as He acted.—*J. P. Smith.*

7. It may be called an *old* commandment which was from the beginning; and also a *new* commandment revealed afresh, and illustrated by Christ.—*A. Clarke.*

Ver. 12—14. There are babes in Christ; there are grown men, and old disciples. As christians have their peculiar states, so they have peculiar duties; but there are precepts and obedience common to them all, particularly mutual love and contempt of the world. We see also that wise pastors will give to the several members of Christ's family their several suitable portions. The apostle addresses, 1. The lowest in the christian school; little children, ver. 12. There are babes in Christ. The apostle encourages them by applying to them first. He addresses the children in christianity, those who had newly tasted that the Lord is gracious, because their sins were forgiven them for his name's sake, ver. 12. The youngest sincere disciple is pardoned; the communion of saints is attended with the forgiveness of sins. These children cannot but be well assured by whose power they are regenerated, and by whose grace they are adopted; they that know the Father, may well be withdrawn from the love of this world. 2. I write unto you, fathers. Those of the longest standing in Christ's school need further advice and instruction. Fathers must be written unto, and preached unto; none are too old to learn; and he writes to them on account of their knowledge. I write unto you, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning, ver. 13, 14. 3. Young men, the adults in Christ Jesus, who are arrived at strength of spirit and sound sense, and can discern between good and evil. The apostle urges the application, Because ye have overcome the wicked one. They had successfully en-

countered the first trials and temptations, breaking off their bad habits and connexions, and entering in at the strait gate of true conversion.

To give this exhortation the greater emphasis, the different descriptions of christians are again addressed, admonishing the little children as those who had known the Father, and already experienced his parental love and compassion, ver. 13. Children are wont to know no man so soon as their father. Children in Christ know that God is their Father; it is their wisdom. The knowledge of old christians is owned. As Christ is Alpha and Omega, so he will be the Beginning and End of our christian knowledge, Phil. 2. 8. Those who know him that was from the beginning, before this world was made, may well be induced thereby to relinquish this world. All their discoveries of Christ's love and truth engage to simple dependence, devoted obedience, and steady confidence in God.

Young men are wont to glory in their strength. It will be the glory of youthful persons to be strong in Christ, and in his grace; but if they do not overcome the devil, he will be too hard for them. Also because of their acquaintance with the word of God. The word of God must abide in the adult disciples: it is the weapon by which they overcome the wicked one; the sword of the Spirit; and those in whom the word of God dwells, are well furnished for the conquest of the world, which ought to be manifested in all its effects by their increasing faithfulness in all good works. To the young men is added that they were strong in faith, hope, love, and all holy affections. When there is real faith, which worketh by love, even children and weak believers may be assured that their sins are forgiven for Christ's sake; and though there are different degrees of knowledge, strength, and every grace, among believers, though some have obtained more victories over self and Satan, and are fit for more active service, all are alike dear to their heavenly Father.

Ver. 15—17. The world, as God created it, was very good, a proper object for a measure of love, but as sin has marred it, our affections should be withdrawn from it. The things of the world may be desired and possessed for the uses and

purposes to which God intended them, and to be used by his grace and to his glory; but believers must not seek or value them for those purposes to which sin abuses them. The several degrees of christians should unite in being dead to the world; were they thus united, they would soon unite on other accounts. The reasons of this caution are several; for it is indeed hard to dissuade even disciples themselves from the love of the world. The first is taken from the inconsistency of this love with the love of God. The heart of man cannot contain both loves; the world draws down the heart from God; and the more the love of the world prevails, the more the love of God decays. The second is taken from the prohibition of worldly lust, ver. 16; God calls us from it, but it intrudes from the world. Here we have a clear statement as to what it is in the world, which is to be crucified and renounced. The things of the world are classed according to the three predominant inclinations of depraved nature. 1. There is the lust of the flesh, the body; irregular desires of the heart, the appetite of indulging all things that excite and inflame the pleasures of the flesh; this lust is usually called luxury. 2. There is the lust of the eyes; the eyes are delighted with riches and rich possessions, and all that wealth can purchase, and inordinately desire these things; this is the lust of covetousness. 3. There is the pride of life: a vain mind craves all the grandeur and pomp of a vain-glorious life; this also includes ambition, and thirst after honour and applause. The objects of these appetites must be abandoned and renounced. The Father forbids them; the indulging of them is insinuated by the insinuating world. The third reason is taken from the vain and vanishing state of earthly things. The world passeth away, and the lust thereof, ver. 17. The things of the world are fading and dying apace: desire itself will ere long fail and cease, Eccl. 12. 5. And what is become of all the pomp and pleasure of those now mouldering in the grave? The fourth reason is taken from the immortality of him that loves God: in opposition to the lover of the world, he abideth for ever, ver. 17. The Object of his love, in opposition to the world that passeth away, abideth for ever: his sa-

cred affection is not like the lust that passeth away; it abideth for ever. The love of God shall never fail; and he himself is an heir of immortality and endless life, and shall be translated thither. Hence observe the purity and spirituality of the apostolical doctrine; the animal life must be subjected to the divine; the body, with its affections, subjugated to the soul; the soul swayed by religion, the love of God.

Many vain efforts have been made to evade the force of this passage by limitations, distinctions, or exceptions. Many have written on it as though they wished to show how far we might be carnally minded, and love the world; but the evident meaning of these verses cannot easily be mistaken. A man may act according to God's commands, for his glory and the good of others, any where that Providence places him; but he cannot seek the things of the world, or place his happiness in them, without being an idolater. Every one who is truly regenerate, is delivered from the dominion of the world and the love of it, he strives and prays against the remains of it, and desires to seek all his happiness from God only. And unless this victory over the world is begun in the heart, a man has no root in himself, but will fall away, or at most remain an unfruitful professor. The pursuit or enjoyment of worldly desires and vanities soon pass away, while the portion of him that doth the will of God, endureth for ever. Yet these vanities are so alluring to the corruption in our hearts, that without constant watching and prayer, we cannot escape the world, or obtain victory over the god and prince of it.

16. "Pride of life." The phrase refers to that ambitious turn of mind, which prompts men to engage in all those pursuits which will supply materials for their vanity, and enable them to make a figure in the world — Doddridge.

Ver. 18—23. It is needful that the disciples should be warned of the haste and end of time. It is a mysterious Providence that antichrists should be permitted; but the disciples should be informed of them. Every man is an antichrist who denies the Person, or any of the offices of Christ; in denying the Son he denies the Father also, and has no part in his favour while he rejects his great salvation. Let the prediction that seducers would arise in the

christian world fortify us against seduction. The purest churches may have apostates and revolvers; but they never from the heart obeyed the form of sound doctrine delivered to them; they were not united with Christ the Head. Had the sacred truth been rooted in their hearts, it would have held them; had they been true christians, they had not turned to be antichrists. They are permitted thus to depart from apostolical doctrine and communion, that their insincerity may be detected, ver. 19. The church knows not well who are its vital members, and who are not, but thus true christians were proved, and rendered more watchful and humble.

The disciples are encouraged in dangerous times by the assurance of their stability. Ye have an unction. True christians are anointed ones; their name intimates as much: they are anointed with grace, with gifts and spiritual endowments, by the Spirit of grace. They are anointed into a similitude of their Lord's offices, as prophets, priests, and kings, unto God. The Holy Spirit is compared unto oil, as well as to fire or water; and the communication of his saving grace is our anointing. This blessing comes from the Holy One; Rev. 3. 7. The Lord Christ disposes of the graces of the Divine Spirit, and he anoints the disciples to make them like to himself, and to secure them to himself. This unction enlightens and strengthens the understanding, as to all things concerning Christ and his religion. It is good to think well concerning our christian brethren; we ought to do so till evidence overthrows our opinion. Those well acquainted with christian truth, are fortified against antichristian error and delusion. No lie is of the truth; frauds and impostures cannot support and propagate the truth. And who is a liar, or the liar, the notorious liar of the time and age in which we live, but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? The great and pernicious lies that the father of lies spreads in the world, usually are falsehoods and errors relating to the person of Christ. There is no truth so sacred and fully attested, but some one or other will contradict or deny it. And he that denies the witness and testimony of the Father concerning Jesus Christ, denies that God is the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ; consequently abandons

the knowledge of God in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself. Such a teacher was an antichrist, who denied both the Father and the Son, seeing that the Father can only be known, approached, worshipped, and glorified by men in and through his Son. The denial of the Son was a denial of the Father, and that idea of a Supreme Being which ancient or modern deniers of the person or offices of the Son profess to worship, is in fact the creature of their own imagination. As there is an intimate relation between the Father and the Son, there is an indivisible union in the doctrine, knowledge, and interests of both; so that he who has the knowledge of, and right to the Son, has the knowledge of, and right to the Father also. The unction from the Holy One alone can preserve from delusions, and, when established in the truth, we shall be satisfied with opposing the testimony of the word of God, to all falsehoods, however ably defended. While we judge favourably of all who trust in Christ as the Divine Saviour, and obey his word, and seek to live in love and union with them, let us pity and pray for those deluded persons who deny the Godhead or weaken the atonement of Christ, and the new creating work of the Holy Ghost. Let us protest against their antichristian doctrine, and decline all needless intercourse with them.

18. Antichrist is any person, thing, doctrine, system of religion, polity, &c. which is opposed to Christ, and to the spirit and spread of his gospel. We need not look for this imaginary being in any person or sect exclusively. Even protestantism may have its antichrist as well as popery. Every man who opposes the spirit of the gospel, and every teacher and writer who endeavours to lower the gospel standard to the spirit and taste of the world, is a genuine antichrist, no matter where, or among whom he is found.—The name has been generally applied to whatever person or thing *systematically* opposes Christ and his religion.—*A. Clarke.*

22. The term "antichrist," is applicable to all ages of the church. It signifies "one that opposes Christ," whether he oppose the doctrine of his Duty or his human nature; or whether he sets himself against Him in respect of his priestly office, by substituting other methods of atoning for sin, and finding acceptance with God; his *kingly* office, by claiming authority to enact laws in his church, contrary to his laws, or to dispense with his commandments; or his *prophetical* office, by claiming authority to add to, alter, or take away from the revelation given in his holy word.—*Scott.*

Antichrists oppose the person of Christ, or his office, or both together, and they that do so in vain boast of God, for in denying the Son the Father also is denied.—*Reformers' Bible.*

23. The latter part of this verse is established on unquestionable authorities, and ought not to be printed in italics as an addition.—T. H. Horne.

Ver. 24—29. The truth concerning Christ is not to be exchanged for novelties. The truth of Christ, abiding in us, is a means to sever from sin, and unite us to the Son of God, John 15. 3, 4. The Son is the Mediator by whom we are united to the Father. What value should we put upon gospel truth! They thereby secure the promise of eternal life, ver. 25. Great is the promise God makes to his faithful adherents; it is suitable to his own greatness, power, and goodness; it is eternal life.

This letter was written to fortify against deceivers, ver. 26. But true christians have an inward confirmation of divine truth: the Holy Spirit has imprinted it on their minds and hearts. It is meet that the Lord Jesus should have a constant witness in the hearts of his disciples. Divine illumination, in order to confirmation, must be continued or constant; by this they were taught all things essential to salvation, and could not be fatally deluded, and we should not desire to teach any thing except what the Holy Ghost has taught us in his word; and the same Spirit teaches all who partake of his anointing, though they differ in less important matters. It is a sure evidence of truth; and all that it teaches, is infallible truth. The Spirit of truth will not lie; and he teaches all things, all things in the present dispensation, all things necessary to our knowledge of God in Christ, and their glory in the gospel. It teaches to abide in Christ; and as it teaches, it secures: it lays a restraint upon our minds and hearts, that we may not revolt from him.

The apostle repeats his kind appellation, little children; which denotes his affection. He would persuade by love. Evangelical privileges oblige to gospel duties; and those anointed by the Lord Jesus abide with him. This duty of perseverance and constancy in trying times is strongly urged from the consideration of his return at the great day of account, ver. 28. This was part of that truth they had heard from the beginning. And when our Lord comes again, he will come from the opened heavens, and every eye shall see him:

then those who continue with him through their temptations, shall have confidence, assurance, and joy, in seeing him, knowing that complete redemption comes with him. On the contrary, those who desert him shall be ashamed of themselves, of their unbelief, ingratitude, and folly, in forsaking so glorious a Redeemer. They shall be ashamed of their hopes, expectations, and pretences, and ashamed of all the wages of unrighteousness, by which they were induced to desert him. Since, then, ye know that the Lord Christ is righteous, the Lord our Righteousness, and the Lord our Sanctifier or our Sanctification; know that he who by the continued practice of christianity abideth in him, is born of him by the regeneration of the Spirit. The new spiritual nature is derived from the Lord Christ. He that is constant to the practice of religion in trying times, gives good evidence that he is born from above, from the Lord Christ. Those who are so, are the children of God. To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, John 1. 12. Then, let us beware of holding the truth in unrighteousness, remembering that those only are born of God who bear his holy image, and walk before him in his most righteous ways.

CHAPTER III.

The apostle breaks out into admiration of the love of God in making believers his children. The purifying influence of a hope of seeing Christ and bearing his likeness, ver. 1—3, and the inconsistency of pretending to this hope, and living in sin, 4—10. Love to the brethren a distinguishing character of real christians, 11—15. That love described by such of its actings as prove it to a man's own conscience to be sincere, 16—21. The advantage of faith, love, and obedience represented, 22—24.

Ver. 1—3. The apostle breaks forth into admiration of Divine grace. It is wonderful, condescending love, of the eternal Father, that such as we should be made and called his sons; we, who by nature are heirs of sin and guilt, who by practice are children of corruption, disobedience, and ingratitude! Strange, that the holy God is pleased to be called our Father, and to call us his sons! Little does the world perceive

the happiness of the genuine followers of Christ. Things happen alike to them as to others. Little does the world think that these poor, humble, contemned ones are favourites of God, and will be inhabitants of heaven. They may bear their case the better, since their Lord was here unknown as well as they. Little did the world think that the Maker of it was once an inhabitant of it. He came to his own peculiar people, and they crucified him, 1 Cor. 2. 8. Let the followers of Christ be content with hard fare here, since they are in a land of strangers, among those who little know them, and where their Lord was so badly treated before them.

Beloved—Christians may well be beloved of each other, for they are beloved of God. They have the nature of sons by regeneration; the title and right to the inheritance of sons by adoption. This honour have all the saints. The full discovery of the bliss belonging to this relation is reserved for another world. The discovery of it here would stop the current of affairs that must now proceed. The sons of God must walk by faith, and live by hope. But the time of the revelation of the sons of God in their proper state and glory, is determined. They may well wait in faith, hope, and earnest desire, for the revelation of the Lord Jesus; as the creation itself waiteth for their perfection, and the public manifestation of the sons of God, Rom. 8. 19. The sons of God will be known, and be made manifest by their likeness to their Head; they shall be filled with life, light, and bliss from him, Col. 3. 4. Their likeness shall enable them to see him as the blessed do in heaven. They shall be transformed into the same image, by the view that they shall have of him.

The sons of God know that their Lord is of purer heart and eyes than to admit any pollution or impurity to dwell with him. Not only does their Lord command them so, but their new nature inclines them so to do. They know that their High Priest is holy, harmless, and undefiled. They know that their God and Father is the high and holy One; that their inheritance is an inheritance of saints in light. It is a contradiction to such hope, to indulge sin and impurity. That we may be saved by hope, we must be purified by

hope. It is the hope of hypocrites, not of the sons of God, that makes allowance for gratifying impure desires and lusts. May we then be followers of him as his dear children, thus show our sense of his unspeakable mercy, and express that obedient, grateful, humble mind which becomes us. Even in our lowest state, and under our heaviest trials, we are the children of God, if we indeed believe in Christ, and we shall have support under all our transient sorrows. Though it does not yet appear what we shall be, enough is known to animate us, and every one in whose heart holiness is planted by the Holy Spirit, purifieth himself in dependence on the grace of Christ, and in contemplation of his glory, becoming more conformed to his perfect purity.

1. "How vast a proof of love!"—*Bloomfield*.
—As "to know" often signifies "to approve," so "not to know," signifies "to disapprove"—*Guyse*.

3 The word "as" binds us not to equal, but to bear such likeness as may discover that we truly aim at being holy—Vain then is the objection of the socinians that were Christ truly God, we could not possibly expect, nor therefore would it be our duty to imitate him; for seeing the example of God himself is made the matter of our imitation, the argument must equally conclude against the Deity of God the Father. In a word, a likeness to him so far as human frailty will permit, is our duty though he is God; a perfect likeness to him who did no sin, could never be acquired even though he were but man.—*JPhibby*

Ver. 4—10. Sin is the rejection of the Divine law, and that is the rejection of the Divine authority, and consequently of God himself. But the design and errand of the Lord Jesus in and to this world was, to remove sin, ver. 5. He came to take away the guilt of our sins, by the sacrifice of himself; to take away the commission of them by implanting a new nature in us; and to dissuade and save from it by his own example. For in him was no sin; he takes sin away, that he might conform us to himself. Those who desire communion with Christ above, will study communion with him here in purity.

He that abideth in Christ, continues not in the practice of sin, ver. 6. As vital union with the Lord Jesus broke the power of sin in the heart and nature; so continuance therein prevents the prevalence thereof in the life and conduct. He does the things that are pleasing

in his sight, and consequently watches against the sin contrary thereto. They abide in the light and knowledge of him; it may be concluded, that he that sinneth hath not seen him, has not his mind impressed with a sound discerning of him, neither has experimental acquaintance with him. Practical renunciation of sin is the great evidence of spiritual union with, continuance in, and saving knowledge of the Lord Christ.

The practice of sin and a justified state are inconsistent; a surmise to the contrary is gross deceit. Herein let no man deceive you. There will be those who will magnify their new light and entertainment of christianity; who will assert that knowledge, or profession, or baptism, will satisfy for inaccuracy of christian life. But beware of such self-deceit. He that doeth righteousness is righteous, and conformity to Christ evidences his interest by faith, and his obedience, and sufferings.

On the other hand, he that committeth sin, as his business and delight, is of the devil, of his family and like him, who was the first sinner and had no pleasure in any thing but sin. But it was impossible to act like the devil, and at the same time to be a disciple of Christ. Let us not serve or indulge what the Son of God came to destroy. To be born of God is to be inwardly renewed by the power of the Spirit of God. Such a one committeth not sin, does not work iniquity and practise disobedience; that is contrary to his new nature and spirit. For, his seed remaineth in him, the word of God in light and power remains in him, 1 Pet. 1. 23; being made to grow in his heart by the Holy Spirit. And that which is born of the Spirit, is spirit; the spiritual principle of holiness remaineth in him. Renewing grace is an abiding principle. Religion is not an art, an acquired dexterity and skill, but a new nature. And the regenerate person cannot continue in the allowed course and practice of habitual sin. General declarations must always be understood according to the argument of the sacred writer, see ch. 1. 9. He cannot sin with allowance and satisfaction, as he did before he was born of God, and as others do that are not so. And the reason is, because he is born of God. There is that light in his mind, which shows him the evil and

malignity of sin. There is that bias upon his heart, which disposes him to loathe and hate sin. There is the spiritual principle or disposition, that breaks the force and fulness of the sinful acts. These obtain not that fulness of heart, spirit, and consent, which they do in others. And there is humiliation and repentance for sin, when committed. The unregenerate person is morally unable for what is religiously good. The regenerate person is happily disabled for sin. There is a restraint laid upon his sinning powers. It goes against him to sin deliberately. How can I commit this great wickedness, and sin against God? Gen. 39. 9. And so they who persist in a sinful life, demonstrate that they are not born of God.

The children of God and the children of the devil have their distinct characters. ver. 10. The seed of the serpent are known by two marks. 1. By neglect of religion; whosoever doeth not righteousness, disregards God; is not of God. The devil is the father of unrighteous or irreligious souls. And, 2. By hatred of sincere christians; neither he that loveth not his brother, ver. 10. True christians are to be loved for God's and Christ's sake. Those who despise, and persecute them, have the nature of the devil abiding in them. The Redeemer did not magnify the law, and make it honourable, that his disciples might despise and break it, but that they might be delivered from its condemnation, and taught to obey its commands. As, in Christ there was no sin, so none that abide in him allow themselves in any transgression of the Divine law. He only is righteous before God, as a justified believer, who is taught and disposed to righteousness by the Holy Spirit. Even unallowed deficiencies, or such transgressions as he may be betrayed into, give him deep distress, and it is impossible for him to take pleasure in such a course. In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil. May all professors of the gospel lay these truths to heart, and examine themselves by them: let none deceive themselves, hoping for heaven while living in the allowed habitual commission of those things for which the Divine wrath comes upon the children of disobedience.

5. In him (Christ) is no sin. Paul tells us that natural concupiscence is sin; therefore this

natural concupiscence is not in Him. The expression here used cannot be limited to actual sin. It refers especially to the constitution of the person of whom it speaks. Sin is not in Him. If his human nature was sinful, and therefore like ours, under the curse, it was impossible for him to avoid death after having assumed human nature, but John 10, 17, 18, in the fullest manner expresses the sovereign power our Lord had over his own life. But as our Lord had his sufferings and death in his power, and as there was nothing in him for which those sufferings were due, it follows that they were a punishment inflicted upon him solely for our sins, and borne by him for us, solely as our substitute. See also Isa. 53, 12; Matt. 20, 28; John 19, 30, &c. And if his human nature needed an atonement, as ours does, then the whole doctrine of the atonement would be annihilated, but the contrary is distinctly asserted; he suffered for sins, *the just for the unjust*, that he might bring us unto God, 1 Pet. 3, 18. See also 1 Pet. 1, 18, 19; 2 Cor. 5, 21. It is the consolation of the believer, that the sacrifice of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, free in every respect from the curse of the law, whose sufferings acquired from the union of the Divine with the human nature in his person an infinite value, and were appointed by the Triune Jehovah as the means of salvation to guilty man, will be accepted by God, when pleaded with him in faith, as a propitiation and atonement for his sins; and thus his guilty soul be looked upon by God with favour, and his person justified and accepted, for the sake of the sufferings and righteousness of Christ. But this could not be if our Lord's human nature was itself like ours, and so was under the curse—on if our Lord's sufferings were in consequence of that condition of being into which he came. Any such views must be opposed to the views of the atonement held by the Christian church in all ages.—The Godhead determined what was requisite to do honour to the injured attributes and broken law of God, that God might be just when accepting the penitent sinner. What this was, is not to be determined or ascertained by carnal reasonings, but by ascertaining what scripture informs us God, in his love to a fallen world, deemed to be necessary, as a condition to the active display of that love, in order, while he opened the door of salvation to a fallen world, to show at the same time to all his creatures, his abhorrence of sin, and determination to visit it with punishment.—The great mystery of godliness is, that God was manifest in the flesh, and that therefore the sufferings of Christ were the sufferings of a God-man; that God hath purchased the church with his own blood, Acts 20, 28; consequently any thing opposed to the infinite worth of Christ's sufferings, is in fact among the worst errors of socialism.—The atonement is a reconciliation effected by the sacrifice of the God-man Christ Jesus upon the cross, not from the union of the human and Divine natures in his person.—Again, the standard of holiness the believer should propose to himself is the perfect holiness of God himself; "He ye holy, for I am holy." But to suppose that the believer can reach that holiness which Christ possessed on earth, while in his present state, in a nature propense to evil, shows ignorance of what perfect holiness is. And as scripture expressly tells us that "in him was no sin" in

all comparisons between Christ and us, this scriptural exception to his likeness to us, is to be taken into the account, nor does that exception in the least affect the question of his real incarnation. The fact is, that the inherent proclivity, or proneness to sin, existing in our fallen nature, is not of "the substance" or essence of that nature in itself, but connected with it by propagation in all the natural descendants of Adam, but from which Christ was preserved by his supernatural generation. All the sinful weaknesses that were the consequences of the fall he took; that is, all those physical infirmities that subject man to suffering, and expose him to temptation. But our moral infirmities he had not. To affirm that any soul, generated as our Lord's, and so connected from the first moment of its existence to a Divine Being, as that the two were united in one person, could have any taint or proclivity to sin, is not merely a blasphemous assertion, but utterly irreconcilable with any correct idea of the constitution of such a Person.—*W. Goode.*

6. This passage is not contradictory to ch. 1, 8-10. The one refers to particular deeds, the other to general practice.—*T. H. Horne.*

Ver. 11-15. The charge from the beginning is, that we should love one another. We should love the Lord Jesus, and value his love, and consequently love all our brethren in Christ. Those destitute of this grace remind us of Cain, his envy and malignity should deter us from harbouring the like passions. He imitated and resembled the first wicked one, the devil. He slew his brother, ver. 12. Sin, indulged, knows no bounds. He was vexed with the superiority of Abel's service, and envied him the favour and acceptance he had with God. For these he martyred his brother, ver. 12. Ill-will teaches to hate and destroy what we should admire and imitate. Then it is no wonder good men are so treated now; Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you, ver. 13. None who are acquainted with the heart of man, can wonder at any effects of the contempt and enmity of ungodly people against the children of God.

We know that we are passed from death to life: we may know it by the evidences of our faith in Christ, of which this love to our brethren is one. It is not a zeal for a party in the common religion, or an affection for, or an affectionation of those who are of the same denomination and subordinate sentiments with ourselves. But this love, supposes a general love to mankind, the law of Christian love in the Christian community. The reason that God

assigns for the certain punishment of a murderer, is a reason against our hatred of any of the brethren, and consequently a reason for our love to them. He who did not regard christians with cordial affection, and indeed every one with good will, abode still in death. The pride, selfishness and envy that naturally abode in his heart, constituted the root of bitterness, from whence murder naturally springs, when restraints are removed, and occasions presented with temptation. He who loved not his brother, in effect hated him, and he who habitually hated believers, bore the image, and was of the disposition of the devil, therefore was one of his children, not a child of the God of love.

The life of grace in the heart of a regenerate person, is the beginning and first principle of a life of glory, whereof they cannot but be destitute who hate their brother in their hearts. So much hatred in a man, so much death, and so much want of love, so much want of life.—(73.)

12. This love is the special fruit of our faith, and a certain sign of our regeneration, Lev. 19. 17—*Bishops' Bible*.

15. There is not any single sin into which it is impossible for a regenerate man to fall. But the apostle was shewing that no true believer could live in *habitual* sin.—*T. Scott*.

Ver. 16—21. The reality and infinite extent of God's love was perceived, that He, in the person of Christ, taking upon him the nature of man, laid down his life for his people, to atone for their sins and ransom their souls. Thus, according to Christ's example, christians are required to lay down their lives for their brethren, when the circumstances call for it. What then shall we say to professors of the gospel, who are rich in this world, but hoard their wealth, or spend it in self-gratification, while they behold their brethren in distress, spiritual or temporal. The Holy Spirit, grieved at this selfishness, will leave the heart disconsolate, and full of darkness and terror. Here is the condescension, the miracle, the mystery of Divine love, that God would redeem the church with his own blood! Surely we should love those whom God hath loved, and so loved: we shall certainly do so, if we have any love for God.

How mortified should the christian be to this life! How prepared to part

with it! And how well assured of a better! The christian must be compassionate and liberal, and communicate to the necessities of the brethren. It pleases God, that some of the christian brethren should be poor, for the exercise of the charity and love of those that are rich. And those who have this world's good, must love God more, and be ready to distribute it for his sake. This love to the brethren is love to God in them; and where there is none of this love to them, there is no true love to God at all.

By what could it be known that a man had a true sense of the love of Christ for perishing sinners, that the love of God had ever been planted in his heart by the Holy Spirit, if the love of the world and its good, overcame the feelings of compassion to his perishing brother? Every instance of this selfishness must weaken the evidences of a man's conversion; when habitual and allowed, it must decide against him.

From these considerations christians are exhorted to love each other, and their poor friends and neighbours, not merely in profession, but in deed and in truth: compliments and flatteries become not christians; but sincere expressions of sacred affection, and services or labours of love. This will evince sincerity in religion, and thus give hope toward God, ver. 19. Let christians leave empty compliments to the men of this world. Those so assured, may have holy boldness or confidence toward God; they may appeal to him from the censures and condemnation* of the world.

The heart, or conscience, either accuses or excuses, condemns or justifies. It is set and placed in this office by God himself. They could not have this warranted assurance of God's love, if they allowed themselves in known sin, or the neglect of known duty. If conscience condemn us, God does so too. God is a greater Witness; and knows more against us. They decided against themselves, when made judges in their own cause; how then could they hope to stand before the infinite God! If conscience acquit us, then have we assurance that God accepts us now, and will acquit us in the great day of account. Possibly, some presumptuous soul may say, My heart does not condemn me, therefore I may conclude God does not.

And, perhaps, on the contrary, on reading ver. 20, some pious trembling soul will be ready to cry out, My heart or conscience condemns me, and I must then infallibly expect the condemnation of God! Let such know, that the errors of the witness are not here reckoned as the acts of the Judge. Acts of ignorance, presumption, and error are not acts of self-consciousness, but of some mistaken power; let conscience therefore be well-informed, be heard, and diligently attended to.

Ver. 22—24. When believers had confidence, towards God, through the Spirit of adoption, and by faith in the great High Priest; coming to the throne of grace, they might ask what they would of their reconciled Father. They would receive it if good for them. Obedient souls have promise of being heard; they who commit things displeasing to God cannot expect that he should hear and answer their prayers, Ps. 66. 18; Prov. 28. 9. We are especially commanded to believe in our Lord Jesus Christ, and to plead his name and merits, that we may receive the blessings of his salvation. It is by the Son that we must come to the Father; through his purchase all our blessings must come; and through his intercession our prayers must be heard and answered. And as good-will to men was proclaimed from heaven, so good-will to men, particularly to the brethren, must be in the hearts of those who go to God and heaven.

He, therefore, who thus follows Christ, dwells in Him as his ark, refuge, and rest, and in the Father through him. It is also manifest, that Christ dwells in him as the Lord of his affections, exercising his power, and displaying his glory. This union between Christ and the souls of believers, subsists by the Spirit he has given them. And this could not relate to miraculous gifts, which were no proof of the gracious indwelling of the Holy Spirit, but to his new-creating energy, producing holy love, and renewing the image of Christ on their souls, then witnessing with their spirits that they were children of God. Thus a free salvation, and the holy obedience of love, are inseparably connected; as the substance of the command of God to sinners, is faith in his Son Jesus Christ, and love to one ano-

ther for his sake. This obedience, though utterly insufficient for our justification, proves that we dwell in him and he in us. The sanctifying Spirit which he has given us, shows that we are children of God, while his consolations are foretastes of our eternal happiness.

CHAPTER IV.

Believers cautioned against giving heed to every one that pretends to the Spirit. How to distinguish the true from the false claimants of it, ver. 1—6. Brotherly love, as a proper characteristic of sincere christians, is enforced by various weighty considerations, 7—21.

Ver. 1—6. God's dwelling in us may be known by the Spirit he gives us; that Spirit may be discerned from other spirits that appear in the world. Believe not every spirit; regard not, trust not, follow not every pretender to the Spirit of God, or every one who professes to have inspiration, or revelation from God. Christians who are well acquainted with the scriptures, may, in humble dependence on Divine teaching, discern who sets forth doctrines according to those of the apostles, and who contradicts them. They are bound to make this trial, that no pretences to inspiration or revelation, should be regarded as more than delusions, when brought against those doctrines delivered by the apostles, which set forth the authenticated and complete light of Divine revelation. It should not seem strange to us, that false teachers set themselves up in the church, it was so in the apostles' times; fatal is the spirit of delusion, sad that men should vaunt themselves as prophets and inspired preachers who are not so.

Here is a test whereby disciples may try pretending spirits. Jesus Christ is to be confessed as the Son of God, the eternal Life and Word, that was with the Father from the beginning; as the Son of God that came into, and came in our human mortal nature, and therein suffered and died at Jerusalem. He who confesses and preaches this, by a mind supernaturally instructed and enlightened therein, does it by the Spirit of God. On the contrary, any impulse, a mere acknowledgment, or pretended inspiration that contradicts this, is far from being from heaven and of God. The sum of revealed religion

is in the doctrine concerning Christ, his person and office. But we have been forewarned that opposition would arise; and the more we see the word of Christ fulfilled, the more confirmed we should be in the truth of it.

The christians whom John affectionately addressed were of God, his children, bearing his image, and adhering to his truth and will. They had been enabled to reject these pernicious doctrines, through the teaching of the Spirit of Christ, who dwelt in them, and was more powerful to uphold and preserve them, than the evil spirit in these deceivers to injure them. The false teachers spake of the world according to its maxims and tastes, so as not to offend carnal men. The world approved them, they made rapid progress and had many followers. They are followed by such as themselves; the world will love its own, and its own will love it. But he who knows the purity and holiness of God, the love and faithfulness of God, the ancient word and prophecies of God, must know that he is with the apostles and their followers; and will attend to them, and abide with them. He who knows not God regards not us. He that is not born of God, who walks according to his natural disposition, walks not with us. The further any are from God, the further they are from Christ, and his servants; and the more addicted persons are to this world, the more remote are they from the spirit of christianity. This doctrine concerning the Saviour's person, as leading men from the world to God, is a mark of the Spirit of truth, in opposition to the spirit of error. The more pure and holy any doctrine is, the more likely to be of God. The test and standard of truth is the same at this day, nor can we by any other rules try the spirits whether they are of God or not. For there are many in the world who agree in scarcely any thing but denying that the Son of God is come in the flesh, to be the propitiation for our sins, and the anointed High Priest, Prophet, and King of his church.

All pretenders to the Spirit are not of God, nor are to be believed and followed; and they that are born of God need not to be stumbled at them, since there ever have been such in the world. True believers are enabled to see through

them and their delusions, and to withstand and overcome them; because God, who dwells in them by his Spirit, is infinitely greater, wiser, and stronger, than the devil who works and prevails upon carnal men by his antichristian emissaries. And what wonder is it, that people of a worldly spirit should adhere to those who are like themselves, and accommodate their schemes and discourses to their corrupt taste.—(82.)

1. Try the spirits. Put these teachers to the proof. Try them by that testimony which is known to come from the Spirit of God, the word of revelation already given.—*A. Clarke.*

2. Or, "That confesseth Jesus Christ, who is come in the flesh."—*Doddridge.*

The known opinions of many heretics of that age, consisted not in a denial of the Divine, but of the human nature of Christ. The best expositors are agreed that here is reference to the tenets of the Docetæ, and other heretics of that day, who held Jesus Christ to have been a phantasm, destitute of a real body.—*Roomfield.*

3. To confess Christ, means not barely professing some kind of regard to him, but yielding a regular, consistent homage, harmonising and falling in with his design. The spirit of antichrist is a usurpation, entirely inconsistent with a due homage to Christ, and founded upon principles most opposite to those of his government and religion; and popery is such. It is said to have been already in the world; as the ambitious, imposing, persecuting spirit, which is the very essence of anti-christianism, then greatly prevailed.—*Doddridge.*

— Or, "Every spirit that confesses Jesus Christ, who has come in the flesh." So Christ himself is the subject of confession in all his characters, and not a mere acknowledgement that he has come.—*Guyse.*

Ver. 7—12. Every one who loved christians, and took pleasure in doing them good, was born of God, and had a saving knowledge of him. The Spirit of God is the Spirit of love. The new nature in the children of God is the offspring of his love: and the temper of it is love. The fruit of the Spirit is love, Gal. 5. 22. Love comes down from heaven. He that does not love the image of God in his people, has no saving knowledge of God. For God is love, goodness, and kindness; it is his nature to be kind, to communicate happiness, consistently with his wisdom, justice, and holiness. The law of God is love: all would have been perfectly happy, had all obeyed it. Love dictated both the law and its requirements. When angels sinned, a God of love, in kindness to his obedient creatures, turned those from

heaven to hell, who would have converted heaven into hell, if they had continued there. When man's apostasy took place, the love of God was not only shown in sparing sinners, and allowing them temporal mercies, but even their pains and sorrows, and death itself, expressed his wise compassion, and tended to prevent the increase of crimes and condemnation. And especially the provision of the gospel, for the forgiveness of sin, and the salvation of sinners, consistently with God's glory and justice, manifest that God is Love. Mystery and obscurity rest upon many things respecting it; but it will be seen as consistent with the most perfect love and the infinite wisdom of God, that the entrance of sin was permitted, and that many rebels are left impenitent. But to argue that none will be finally miserable, is the height of impiety and presumption. What do we know concerning the purposes of Divine love, or how they are best answered! It is enough for us to know that God has so shown himself to be love, that we cannot come short of eternal happiness, except through unbelief and impenitence, although strict justice would condemn us to hopeless misery because we transgressed our Creator's law.

That God is Love, is argued from the display and demonstration that he hath given of it; as, that he hath loved us, such as we are. God commendeth his love towards us, in that, while we were sinners, Christ died for us, Rom. 5. 8. Strange, that God should love impure, vain, vile dust and ashes! That he has loved us at such a rate, that he has given his only-beloved, blessed Son for us! The Son of God, the Only begotten; it is a mystery and a miracle. Divine love, that such a Son should be sent into our world for us! for such a good and beneficial end to us—that we might live through him, might live for ever through him, might live in heaven, live with God, in eternal glory and blessedness with him and through him!

And that God loved us first, and in the circumstances in which we lay; herein is love, unusual, unprecedented love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us, ver. 10. He loved us, when we had no love for him: when undeserving, ill-deserving, and unclean, needing to be washed from our sins in sacred

blood. That he gave his Son for such service, to be the Propitiation for our sins; consequently, to die for us, to die under the law and curse of God, to bear our sins in his own body, to be crucified, to be wounded in his soul, and pierced in his side, to die and be buried for us.

None of our words or thoughts can do justice to the free, astonishing love of a holy God towards sinners who could not profit or harm him, whom he might justly have crushed in a moment, whose desert of his vengeance was shown in the very method by which they were saved, and who could by his almighty word have created other worlds, with more perfect beings, if he had seen fit. Search we then the whole universe for love in its most glorious displays? it is to be found in the person and the cross of Christ. Does love exist between God and sinners? here was the origin, not that we loved God, but that he freely loved us.

Divine love to the brethren should constrain us. If God so loved us, we ought also to love one another, ver. 11. The objects of the Divine love should be objects of ours. Shall we refuse to love those whom the eternal God hath loved? The love of God to the world should induce universal love among mankind. The peculiar love of God to the church and to the saints, should produce peculiar love in them. If God so loved us, we ought surely to love one another.

The Christian love is an assurance of the Divine inhabitation; If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, ver. 12, but not by any visible presence, or appearance to the eye. He does not that way demand our love; but in the way in which he has thought meet, and that is, in the illustration he has given of himself and of his love, and thereupon of his loveliness. In the brethren and in his appearance for them and with them, God is to be loved; and thus, if we love one another, God dwelleth in us. And his love is perfected in us, ver. 12. His love could not be designed to be ineffectual and fruitless upon us, and when its proper genuine end and issue are attained and produced thereby, it may be said to be perfected. So faith is perfected by its works, and love perfected by its operations. It is therein and so far perfected and completed, though this our love is not at present perfect, nor the ultimate end of the Divine love to us. How

desirous then should we be of this brotherly christian love! Thus it will appear that God dwells in us by his new creating Spirit, and his love will be perfected in us.

9, 10. It is supposed that, by giving Christ the title of God's only begotten Son, the apostle intended to overturn the error of Ebiion and Cerinthus, who affirmed that Christ was not God's Son by nature, but that, like other good men, he was honoured with that title on account of his virtues—*Bloomfield*. The abhorrence which the apostle testified at the doctrines of Cerinthus is recorded in ecclesiastical history.

Ver. 13—17. For God to dwell in us and we in him, were words too high for mortals to use, had not God put them before us. What it fully is, must be left to the revelation of the future world. But this mutual indwelling we know, says the apostle, because he has given us of his Spirit. He has lodged the image and fruit of his Spirit in our hearts, ver. 13; the Spirit that he has given us, is his, or of him, since it is the Spirit of power, of zeal for God, of love to God and man, and of a sound mind.

But how may it be known whether the testimony does proceed from the Holy Ghost, and therefore whether it is a true and certain testimony? 1. By the persuasion, for the Holy Ghost does not simply say it, but persuades with us, that we are the sons of God, and no flesh can do this. 2. He persuades by reasons drawn, not from our works or any worth in us, but only from the goodness of the Father, and the grace of Christ. In this manner the devil never persuaded any. 3. Those who are persuaded that they are the sons of God, cannot but call him Abba, Father; and, from love to him, hate sin, and whatever disagrees with his will, and have a sound and hearty desire to do his will. Such testimony is the testimony of the Holy Ghost.—(56.)

The Lord Jesus is Son to the Father, and so as to be God with the Father. In his relation and office towards us he is the Saviour of the world. He saves us, by his death, example, intercession, Spirit, and power. The Father sent the Son, he willed his coming hither. The apostles had seen the Son of God in his human nature, so as to be satisfied that he was the Only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. The apostle attests this, The evidence of the truth warrants to testify it everywhere. And

whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God, ver. 15. This confession includes faith in the heart as the foundation; acknowledgment with the mouth to the glory of God and Christ; and profession in the life and conduct, in opposition to the flatteries or frowns of the world. Thus no man says that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost, by the external attestation and internal operation of the Holy Ghost, 1 Cor. 12. 3. He who thus confesses Christ, and God in him, might be assured that he dwelt in God as his refuge and rest, and that God, by the Holy Spirit, dwelt in him as his temple. The christian revelation is the revelation of the Divine love; the history of the Lord Christ is the history of God's love to us. Hence we learn, that God has incomparable, incomprehensible love for us of this world, which he has demonstrated in the mission and mediation of his beloved Son. And what will not the God of love do, when he designs to commend his love, and to recommend himself to our conviction, and also affection, as Love itself? He that dwells in sacred love, has the love of God shed abroad in his heart, has the impress of God upon his spirit; the Spirit of God sanctifying and sealing him, lives in the meditation, views, and tastes of the Divine love, and he will ere long go to dwell with God for ever.

There must be a day of universal judgment, ver. 17. Happy they who shall have holy boldness before the Judge at that day; who shall be able to lift up their heads, as knowing he is their Friend and Advocate! Happy they who have holy boldness in the prospect of that day, who look and wait for it, and for the Judge's appearance! True love to God assures believers of God's love to them. As God is faithful to his promise, so we can easily be persuaded of his love, and the happy fruits of his love, when we can say, Thou that knowest all things, knowest that we love thee; our hope, founded upon the consideration of God's love, will not disappoint us, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost that is given to us. Rom. 5. 5. And we have this boldness toward Christ, because as he is, so are we in this world. Love teaches us to suffer for him and with

him; therefore we may trust that we shall also be glorified with him, 2 Tim. 2. 12.

17. Even as He is, even so are believers in the world, not in equality, but in conformity of holiness.—*Perkins*.

Ver. 18—21. So far as love prevails, fear ceases. We must here distinguish between the fear of God and being afraid of him; the fear of God is the substance of religion, 1 Pet. 2. 17; Rev. 14. 7, and imports high regard and veneration for God; such fear is consistent with perfect love, and is in the angels. The obedience and good works performed from this principle, were not like the servile diligence of one who unwillingly laboured from dread of a master's indignation; but like that of a dutiful child, who performs services to a beloved father, which benefit his brethren, and are willingly performed. There is no dread in love; love considers its object as good and excellent, therefore worthy to be beloved. Those who perfectly love God, are, from his nature, and counsel, and covenant, perfectly assured of his love, consequently are perfectly free from any suspicions of his justice as armed against them. They know that God loves them, and thereupon triumph in his love. Fear is disquieting and torturing, especially such fear as is the dread of an almighty avenging God; but perfect love casteth out torment, for it teaches the mind perfect acquiescence and complacency in the Beloved, therefore perfect love casteth out fear. And it is a sign that our love is far from being perfect, when our doubts, and fears, and apprehensions of God, are many. Let us then long for, and hasten to the world, of perfect love, where our serenity and joy in God will be as perfect as our love. We love God, because he first loved us, ver. 19. We cannot but love a God, who loved us when we were both unloving and unlovely: who loved us at so great a rate as his Son's blood, and has condescended to beseech us to be reconciled unto him. Let heaven and earth stand amazed at such love! He sent his word to invite sinners to partake of this great salvation. He regenerates them by his Spirit, and so brings them into a state of acceptance and reconciliation, by repentance and faith in Christ. Let them take the comfort of the happy change wrought in them, while they give him the glory.

The love of God in Christ, produced in the hearts of christians by the Spirit of adoption, is the great proof of conversion. This must be tried by its effects on their temper and conduct towards their brethren. If a man profess to love God, and yet indulges resentment, or shows a selfish disposition, he therein gives his profession the lie. That such a one loves not God, the apostle proves; as things unseen less catch the mind, and thereby the heart. The member of Christ has much of God visible in him; how then shall the hater of a visible image of God pretend to love the invisible God himself? How can he be supposed to love God who habitually breaks his command and acts contrary to his endearing example? Let us then pray without ceasing that we may more entirely love Him who hath first loved us. And if it is evident that our natural enmity is changed into affection and gratitude, let us bless the name of our God for this seal and earnest of eternal happiness. In return for his mercy, and in obedience to his commandment, let us do good to our brethren, and thus show that although our love is imperfect, yet we differ from the false professors who pretend to love God, whom they have not seen, and yet hate their brethren, whom they have seen.

18. We are not to suppose that the love of God casts out every kind of fear from the soul; it only casts out that which has torment. Filial fear is properly the guardian of love.—*A. Clarke*.

CHAPTER V.

Brotherly love is the effect of a new birth, which makes obedience to all God's commandments pleasant, and of such a faith in Christ as overcomes this world, ver. 1—5. To establish faith in Christ, here is reference to witnesses concurring to prove that Jesus, the Son of God, is the true Messiah, 6—9. The satisfaction the believer has in his own soul about Christ, and eternal life through him, and God's hearing and answering prayers offered up according to his will, 10—17. The happy condition of true believers, and a charge to renounce all idolatry, 18—21.

Ver. 1—5. Every one who has truly believed Jesus to be the promised Messiah; who has received, honoured and obeyed him, according to the testimony of scripture, assuredly is born of God. This faith must be the effect of Divine

life, and cannot be separated from good fruits. All who profess to love God, the Father of the regenerate, must love his children. True love for the people of God may be distinguished from natural kindness or party attachments, by its inseparable connexion with the love of God, and obedience to his commands. The same Holy Spirit that taught the one will have taught the other also; and that man cannot truly love the children of God, who habitually commits sin or neglects known duty.

The nature and effect of love to God, consists in disposing the heart to full and ready obedience; and as his commands are holy, just, and good, the rule of liberty and happiness, so those who are born of God and love him, do not count them grievous, but delight in obedience, and lament they cannot serve him more perfectly. This requires self-denial and occasions various trials, but true christians have a principle which carries them above all hinderances. For the new and heavenly nature imparted in regeneration, tends so powerfully to God and holiness, that all in whom it is found are made victorious over the world. They are enabled to overcome their natural love for its vanities and pleasures, and their natural fear of its contempt and opposition. Though the conflict often is sharp, and the regenerate may be cast down, yet he will arise and renew the combat with resolution. He will habitually profess the truth, and do the will of God. In obtaining this victory, faith is principally concerned, the exercises of which give determination to the conduct of the true christian. But all, except believers in Christ, are habitually enslaved, in some respect or other, to the customs, opinions, or interests of the world, and dare not act in all things according to the conscientious conviction of their own minds, without being warped by some influence connected with the world. Faith is the cause of victory, the means, the instrument, the spiritual armour by which we overcome. In and by faith we cleave to Christ, in contempt of, and in opposition to, the world. Faith works in and by love to God and Christ, and so withdraws us from the love of the world. Faith sanctifies the heart, and purifies it from sensual lusts, by which the world obtains such sway and do-

minion over souls. It obtains the indwelling Spirit of grace, that is greater than he who dwells in the world. It sees an invisible world at hand, with which this world is not worthy to be compared, and into which the soul must be continually prepared to enter. It is the real christian that is the true conqueror of the world, ver. 5, and by faith overcomes the world. He is fully satisfied that this world is a vehement enemy to his soul, to his holiness, and his happiness. He sees, in and by the life and conduct of the Lord Jesus on earth, that this world is to be renounced and overcome. He perceives that the Lord Jesus conquered the world, not for himself only, but for his followers; and they must seek to be partakers of his victory. He is taught and influenced, by the Lord Jesus' death, to be mortified and crucified to the world. He knows that the Saviour is gone to heaven, and is there preparing a place for believers, John 14. 2. His spirit and disposition cannot be satisfied with this world, but looks beyond it, and is still tending, striving, and pressing toward heaven. This faith in Christ is united with humility, hatred of sin, and indifference for the world; and the world is thus overcome. Let all who profess to believe the gospel, inquire whether they are contending for this victory. For we must all, after Christ's example, overcome the world, or it will overcome us to our ruin.

Ver. 6—9. The Lord Jesus came to save us from our sins; to give us eternal life, and he came by, or with water and blood. We are inwardly and outwardly defiled; inwardly, by the power and pollution of sin in our nature. For our cleansing from this we need spiritual water; such as can reach the soul and the powers of it. Accordingly, there is in and by Christ Jesus, the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost. The two sacraments, baptism with water, as the outward sign of regeneration, and purifying from the pollution of sin by the Holy Spirit, and that of the Lord's supper, as the outward sign of the shedding Christ's blood, and the receiving him by faith, for pardon and justification, some consider are here intended. We are defiled outwardly, by the guilt and condemning power of sin upon our persons. By this we are

separated from God. From this we must be purged, by atoning blood, Heb. 9. 22. The Saviour from sin must come with blood. Both these ways of cleansing were represented in the old ceremonial institutions. There were divers washings and carnal ordinances, Heb. 9. 10. As these show us our double defilement, so they indicate the Saviour's twofold cleansing. At and upon the death of Christ, his side being pierced, out of the wound there immediately issued water and blood. This John, the beloved apostle, saw, and seems to have been affected with the sight; he alone records it. This water and blood comprehended all that is necessary and effectual to our salvation. By the water our souls are washed and purified for heaven and the region of saints in light. By the blood the Divine law is honoured. By the blood we are justified, reconciled, and presented righteous to God. By the blood, the curse of the law being satisfied, the purifying Spirit is obtained for the internal ablution of our natures. The water, as well as the blood, issued out of the side of the sacrificed Redeemer. He loved the church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word; that he might present it to himself a glorious church, Eph. 5. 25, 27. And it was meet that the Saviour of the world should have a constant Agent to testify of him to the world. This was done in and by the Spirit of God; according to the Saviour's declaration. He is the Spirit of God, and cannot lie.

There were three that had borne witness to these doctrines concerning the person and the salvation of Christ. The Father, repeatedly by a voice from heaven declared that Jesus was his beloved Son, and testified the acceptance of his sacrifice by raising him from the dead. The Word in the beginning was with God, was God, and declared that He and the Father were One, and that whoso had seen him had seen the Father, while his miracles and the fulfilment of ancient prophecy, showed that his testimony was divine. And the Holy Ghost, who descended from heaven and rested on Christ at his baptism, who had borne witness to Him by all the ancient prophets, and attested his resurrection and mediatorial office, by the gift of miracu-

lous powers, to the apostles. These three Divine witnesses, though personally distinct, are "One" in the unity of the Godhead. This passage supplies only an additional argument to many in other parts of scripture which set forth the doctrine of one God, subsisting in three coequal Persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, into whose one name we have been baptized. Whether, therefore, this passage be cited or not, the doctrine of the Trinity in Unity stands equally firm and unassailable.

To the apostolic doctrine, respecting the person and salvation of Christ, there were three testimonies. 1. The Holy Spirit. We come into the world endued with a corrupt carnal disposition, which is enmity to God. This disposition must be mortified and abolished, and the true disciple become a new creature. The regeneration and renovation of souls are a testimony to the Saviour, and thus to the Spirit belong not only the regeneration and conversion of the church, but her progressive sanctification, victory over the world, her peace, and love, and joy, and all that grace by which she is made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light. 2. The water; this intimates the Saviour's purity and purifying power. He was holy, harmless, and undefiled. The purity of his doctrine. Now ye are clean through the word that I have spoken unto you, John 15. 3. The actual and active purity and holiness of his disciples is represented by baptism. 3. The blood which he shed; and this was our ransom. This testifies for Jesus Christ; it sealed up and finished the sacrifices of the Old Testament. It confirmed his predictions and the truth of his ministry and doctrine, John 18. 37. It showed unparalleled love to God, in that Christ would die a sacrifice making atonement for the sins of the world. It demonstrated unspeakable love to us. It lays obligations on his disciples to suffer and die for him. Thus the benefits accruing and procured by his blood demonstrate that he is indeed the Saviour of the world. These are signified and sealed in the institution of his own supper; This is my blood of the new testament, (which ratifies the new testament,) which is shed for many, for the remission of sins, Matt. 26. 28. No wonder if the rejecter of this evidence be judged as a blasphemer of

the Spirit of God, and left to perish without remedy. These three witnesses are for one and the same purpose and cause; or agree in one and the same thing. If we receive the witness of men, and such testimony is and must be admitted, the witness of God is greater. It is truth itself, of highest authority and infallible. God, that cannot lie, hath given assurance that Jesus Christ is his Son, to reconcile and recover the world unto himself. He testified therefore the truth and divine original of the religion of Christ, and that it is the sure appointed way and means of bringing us to eternal happiness. Nothing can be more absurd than the conduct of those who doubt as to the truth of christianity, while in the common affairs of life they do not hesitate to proceed on credible human testimony, and would deem any one out of his senses who declined to do so. If we receive the witness of men, we have clear proof to the truth of christianity, and assuredly the witness of God is greater.

6. The mystical signification of both the sacraments, baptism and the Lord's supper, is nothing else but faith in Christ Jesus: for as baptism is called a sacrament of faith, and therefore is sometimes by writers put for faith; so those that are well instructed in the knowledge of Christ, understand, that to eat the flesh of Christ, is the same with believing in him. If we rightly consider the nature of this sacrament, there cannot be a more evident demonstration that we are justified by no other thing but faith only. For by what argument could it be more manifestly set before our eyes, how great benefit re-conds to us from the shedding of the blood of Christ, than by the institution of the sacramental bread and wine, for a memorial of his body and blood? Or by what other thing could he more effectually represent unto our faith the powerful efficacy of his death, than by the institution of this sacrament.—*John Fox.*

7. &c. The following words in these verses, "—in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness in earth," as it is well known, have given rise to much controversy respecting their genuineness. Several volumes have been written upon the subject, respecting which it is not possible or indeed necessary to enter into full particulars in this place. They are admirably stated in a little work entitled, "Memoir of the Controversy respecting the three Heavenly Witnesses."

T. H. Horne has given a complete statement of the evidence on both sides, which he recapitulates at the conclusion, and of that recapitulation the following is an abridgment.

Against the genuineness of the passage, 1. It is not found in any greek manuscript written before the sixteenth century. 2 It is wanting in the earliest and best critical printed editions. 3. It is in no ancient version except-

ing the latin. 4. It is wanting in many of the most ancient latin manuscripts. 5. It is not quoted by any greek father or early ecclesiastical writer. 6. It is not quoted by any latin father. 7. The protestant reformers omitted it, or marked it as doubtful.

For the genuineness the external evidence is, 1. It is found in the earliest latin version and in most of the manuscripts of the vulgate. 2. It is found in the confession of faith and liturgy of the greek church, and in the primitive liturgy of the latin church. It is cited by some early latin fathers. All these points, however, are disputed, particularly the latter. The internal evidence urged is, 1. The connexion of the clause requires its insertion. 2. The grammatical structure requires it. 3. The doctrine of the greek article supports it. 4. The mode of diction and thinking is peculiar to St. John. 5. That the omission may be accounted for by supposing two editions of the original—the scarcity of early copies left room for fraud or negligence in the scribes—the arians might have expunged it—the orthodox might have withdrawn it from regard to the mystery of the Trinity—the negligence of transcribers has caused this as well as other omissions—the greek fathers have omitted to quote other texts bearing on this controversy.

After a full review of all the preceding arguments, remarkable for its clearness and candour, *T. H. Horne* says that he considers the clause must be abandoned as spurious, nor can any thing less than the positive authority of unsuspected manuscripts justify the admission of so important a passage into the sacred canon. He observes from *Marsh* that no arguments from internal evidence, however ingenious, can outweigh the mass of external evidence which applies to the case in question. He adds, that the absence of the clause neither does nor can diminish the weight of irresistible evidence which other undisputed passages of holy writ afford to the doctrine of the Trinity. There are, to adopt the deliberate judgment of *Griesbach*, so many arguments for the true Deity of Christ, that it cannot be called in question; the Divine authority of scripture being granted, and just rules of interpretation acknowledged. The exordium of St. John's gospel, in particular, is a conspicuous and above all exception, that this doctrine never can be overturned, and taken away from the defenders of the truth.

J. P. Smith says, "If the evidence allowed us to regard this text as genuine, nothing could be adduced from it with absolute satisfaction but a unity of testimony. It is not therefore necessary to enlarge upon it." The same view is adopted in this comment.

Ver. 10—13. Here is, 1. The privilege and stability of the real christian; He that believeth on the Son of God unfeignedly cleaves to him for salvation. He has not only the outward evidence, but in his own heart a testimony for Jesus Christ. He can allege what Christ has done for his soul. He has deeply seen his sin, and guilt, and misery, and his abundant need of such a Saviour. He has seen the suitableness of such a Saviour to all his spiritual wants and

sorrowful circumstances. He has found and felt the power of the word and doctrine of Christ, wounding, humbling, healing, quickening, and comforting his soul. He finds that the revelation of Christ, as it is the greatest discovery and demonstration of the love of God, so it is the most apt and powerful means of kindling and increasing love to the holy and blessed God. He has a new heart and nature; a new love, disposition, and delight, and is not the man that formerly he was. He finds still such a conflict with himself, with sin, with the flesh, the world, and invisible wicked powers, as is described and provided for in the doctrine of Christ. He finds such prospects and such strength afforded him by faith in Christ, that he can despise and overcome the world, and travel on towards a better. He finds what interest the Mediator has in heaven, by the prevalence of the prayers that are sent thither in his name, according to his will, and through his intercession. He has a lively hope, holy confidence in God, a comfortable prospect of life and immortality, being enriched with the earnest of the Spirit. Such assurance has the gospel believer: he has a witness in himself, which puts the matter out of doubt with him, except in hours of peculiar darkness or conflict, and he cannot be argued out of his belief in the leading truths of the gospel.

Here is, 2. The aggravation of the unbeliever's sin; the sin of unbelief. He does, in effect, give God the lie; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son. He must disbelieve that God sent his Son into the world, or believe that he permits men to devise a religion, which, in all parts of it, is pure, holy, heavenly, undefiled, and worthy to be embraced by the reason of mankind, which is yet a delusion and a lie. Also that he sends his Spirit and power to recommend it to the world. All revelation centres in this fundamental doctrine, and it is in vain for a man to plead that he believes the testimony of God in other things while he rejects it in this. His opinion may indeed accord with the doctrine of scripture, in matters more level to the human understanding, and less opposed to human pride, or more reconcilable to the pursuits and friendship of the world; but if his own

reasonings, or some fancied philosophy, oppose this testimony of God, he makes Him a liar. The light of the sun is not sufficient unless men may bring their own candle! But no belief of the bible, or of any thing revealed therein, is of any avail to salvation, except a man believe the testimony God hath given of his Son, the doctrines relative to the Son of God, one with the Father. God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son, ver. 11. This is the sum of the gospel. The Son is eternal life in his own person. He is the Spring of our spiritual and glorious life, Col. 3. 4. From him life is communicated to us. And it must follow, He that hath the Son, hath life, ver. 12. He that is united to the Son, is united to life. He that hath not the Son of God, hath not life, ver. 12. He refuses the Procurer of life, and the Way to it; he provokes God to deliver him to endless death. He that refuses to trust and honour Christ as the Son of God, who disdains to submit to his teaching as Prophet, to rely on his atonement and intercession as High Priest, or to obey him as King, is dead in sin, under condemnation; nor will any outward morality, learning, forms, notions, or confidences avail. Upon all this evidence, it is but right that we believe on the name of the Son of God, ver. 13. These believers have eternal life in the covenant of the gospel: in the beginning and first-fruits of it within them; and in their Lord and Head in heaven. They should value the scriptures, which are written for their consolation and salvation. To withdraw from believing on the name of the Son of God, is to renounce eternal life. The evidences of religion and the advantages of faith, encourage us to persevere to the end. Then let us thankfully receive the record of scripture. Thus we may give diligence to obtain assurance of our interest in Christ, and know that we have eternal life, and daily grow stronger in faith, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that our labour is not in vain in the Lord.

Ver. 14—17. The Lord Christ emboldens us to come to him in all circumstances, with all our supplications and requests, notwithstanding the sin that besets us. Our prayers must always be offered in submission to the will of

God. And then we may have confidence that the prayer of faith shall be heard in heaven. Great are the deliverances, mercies, and blessings, which every petitioner needs. In some things the prayers of believers are speedily answered; in others they may be satisfied that they are granted in the best manner, though not as requested, and even when for the present denied, they will be answered as shall be most for God's glory and their own good.

We ought to pray for others, as well as for ourselves. There is a sin unto death. And it must be left for Divine wisdom or goodness, or even gospel severity, to determine how far the chastisement or the scourge shall proceed. There are sins, which are inconsistent with spiritual life in the soul and the entrance to life above. Such are total impenitence and unbelief at present; and final impenitence and unbelief are infallibly to death eternal; as also blaspheming the Spirit of God in the testimony he has given to Christ and his gospel, and a total apostasy from the christian religion. This doubtless is the sin unto death here intended, and we must leave such a person to God's judgments, without expecting to see him renewed to repentance.

Life is to be asked of God; he is the God of life. In the case of a brother's sin not in the manner already mentioned, unto death, we may in faith and hope pray for him: and particularly for the life of soul and body. But in case of the sin unto death in the before-mentioned ways, perhaps the expression may intend, I have no promise for you in that case; no foundation for the prayer of faith. We cannot pray that the sins of the impenitent and unbelieving should, while they are such, be forgiven them; or that mercy which supposes the forgiveness of sins, should be granted to them, while they continue such. But we may pray for their repentance, for their being enriched with faith in Christ, and thereupon for all other saving mercies.

Again, the apostle seems to argue that there is sin that is not unto death; thus, All unrighteousness is sin, ver. 17. and so deserves death, or condemnation; but were all unrighteousness unto death, since we have all some unrighteousness toward God or man, or

both, in omitting and neglecting something that is their due, then we all should be bound over to death; yet since it is not so, there must be sin that is not to death. Though there is not venial sin, in the common acceptation, there is pardoned sin. If it were not so, there could be no justification, nor continuance of the justified state. Thus christians are to pray for their brethren even when fallen. We should abound in prayer for others, as well as ourselves, beseeching the Lord to pardon and recover the fallen, as well as to relieve the tempted and afflicted. And let us be truly thankful that no sin is unto death of which any one truly repents.

16 "He shall give him life, even to them that sin not unto death."—*S. holefield.*

17. No offence is venial in itself; but only through God's mercy, who will not impute all offences expressly unto death, although in justice he might. So that it is concluded that sin mortal, and venial, in being so, are not intrinsically and essentially distinguished, but only in respect of the Divine mercy.—*See Perkins.*

Ver. 18—21. We know that whosoever is born of God, and the believer in Christ is born of God, ver. 1, sinneth not; sinneth not with that heart and spirit which the unregenerate do, ch. 3. 6. 9, and consequently not with the guilt that is unavoidably unto death. The new nature, and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, prevent the admission of unpardonable sin. They are fortified against the devil's destructive attempts. He that is begotten of God keepeth himself, is enabled to guard himself, and the wicked one may not touch him to death. It seems not barely a narration of the duty or the practice of the regenerate, but an indication of their power by virtue of their regeneration. Satan may prevail so far as to draw them to some acts of sin; but their regeneration secures them from such assaults as will bring them into the same actual condemnation with the devil.

Mankind are all divided into two parties or dominions—that which belongs to God, and that which belongs to the wicked one. Christian believers belong to God; they are of God, and from him, and to him, and for him; while the rest, by far the greater part, are in the power of the wicked one. They are overcome by him and brought into bondage to him, they do his works and support his

cause. This general declaration includes all unbelievers, whatever their denomination, profession, station, or situation.

* Believers are enlightened in the knowledge of the true eternal God. The Son of God came into our world, and has given us an internal light, whereby we discern the true God, so that the believing and sanctifying knowledge of the Son of God is the effect of Divine grace, through the Holy Spirit, who is truth. Thus they, having the witness in themselves, by faith abide in Christ as their rest and refuge. The Son leads believers to the Father, and they are in the love and favour of both; in spiritual union with both, by the indwelling and working of the Holy Spirit.

The apostle's concluding words are, Little children, dear children, keep yourselves from idols. ver. 21. Since ye know the true God, and are in him, let your light and love guard you against all that is advanced in opposition to him. Flee from the false gods of the heathen world. Hold no communion with your heathen neighbours in their idolatrous worship; God is jealous, and would have you come out, and be separated from among them; mortify the flesh, and be crucified to the world, that they may not usurp the throne and dominion in the heart, which is due only to God. The God whom you have known, is he who made you, who redeemed you by his Son, who has sent his gospel to you, who has pardoned your sins, renewed you unto himself by his Spirit, and has given you eternal life. Cleave to him in faith, and love, and constant obedience, in opposition to all things that would alienate your mind and heart from God. Happy are they to whom it is thus given to know that the Son of God is come, and to have a heart to trust in and rely on him that is true. May this be our privilege; may we dwell in Christ and Christ in us; may we be one with Him and He with us. Thus our fellowship

will be with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit: we shall be preserved from all idols and condemning heresies, and from the idolatrous love of worldly objects, and be kept by the power of God, through faith, unto eternal salvation. To this living and true God be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

19, 20. *J. P. Smith* considers the connexion of the sentiment to be, that it is the Lord Jesus who has given us this unspeakable blessing, this knowledge of the True One; he has come, he has been manifested in the flesh, for that very purpose; yea, our holy and happy union with the True One is, in fact, our union, by the living principle of religion, with the Saviour himself; him we have before declared to be "the Eternal Life," to Him we look with gratitude and joy, saying, "This is the true God."

21. That is a man's idol or god from which he seeks his happiness, be it any earthly or heavenly thing, God, the supreme good, only excepted. That is a man's idol, which prevents him from seeking and finding his *all* in God.—*A. Clarke.*

COINCIDENCES BETWEEN THE GOSPEL AND FIRST EPISTLE OF JOHN

In respect of the matter or subject of this epistle, the writer has shown himself to be John the apostle, by a number of sentiments and expressions also found in the gospel, which all christians, from the beginning, have acknowledged to be the work of John the apostle. *Macknight* points out some of these coincidences, and says, No reader who is capable of discerning what is peculiar in a writer's turn of thinking, can entertain the least doubt of their being the production of the same writer.

EPISTLE.		GOSPEL.	
Ch. 1.	1.	Ch. 1.	1, 14, 4, 14.
2	5.		14. 23.
2.	6, see 3 24; 4.		15. 4.
	13 16.		13. 34.
2.	8.		13. 34.
3.	11.		1. 5, 9.
2.	8.		11. 10.
—	10.		17. 3.
2.	13, 14.		3 3, 5.
2.	29, see 3. 9; 5. 1.		1. 12.
3.	1.		17. 24.
3.	2.		8. 44.
3.	8.		15. 20.
3.	13.		3. 16.
4.	9.		1. 18.
4.	12.		20. 31.
5.	13.		14. 14.
5.	14.		17. 2
5.	20		

THE SECOND EPISTLE OF JOHN.

SOME hesitation has existed as to the second and third epistles of John, but there can be no doubt that they were at an early period known and received as genuine productions of that apostle, and written about the same period as his first epistle. It is probable that, being letters to private persons, they had for a considerable time been kept in possession of the families to whom they were originally sent, and when first discovered, the church of Christ, ever on its guard against imposture, particularly in relation to writings professing to be the work of apostles, hesitated to receive them until it was fully ascertained that they were Divinely inspired.

There is considerable uncertainty respecting the person to whom the second epistle is addressed. The most probable opinion is that which considers it as addressed to the Lady Electa, who is supposed to have been an eminent christian matron. It presents an epitome of the first, and touches, in few words, on the same points. The Lady Electa is commended for her virtuous and religious education of her children; is exhorted to abide in the doctrine of Christ, to persevere in the truth, and carefully to avoid the delusions of false teachers. But chiefly the apostle beseeches her to practise the great and indispensable commandment of christian love and charity. This epistle is remarkable for the spirit of christian love which it breathes.

The apostle salutes the elect lady and her children, ver. 1—3. Expresses his joy in their faith and love, 4—6. Cautions them against deceivers, whom he describes, 7—9. Directs their conduct toward them, 10, 11. And concludes, noticing the shortness of his writing, and promising, God willing, to make them a visit, and discourse more largely about the things he had touched upon; and with salutations, 12, 13.

Ver. 1—3. Ancient epistles began, as here, with salutation and good wishes: religion consecrates forms as far as may be, and turns compliments into real expressions of respect and love. The penman was the elder, emphatically and eminently so. An old disciple is honourable; an old apostle and leader of disciples is more so. He was old in holy service and experience, had seen and tasted much of heaven, and was much nearer to it than when at first he believed. That love is most cordial and lasting which christians bear to one another in the truth and for the sake of it, for this will dwell in their souls to eternity, and be with them as the source of most perfect happiness.

The letter is to a noble christian matron, and her children—it is well that the gospel should get among such; it is desirable that persons of rank should be acquainted with the Lord Christ and his religion, and some, though usually not many, noble are called. Here is a pattern for persons of quality of the same sex, in one chosen of God; it is lovely and beautiful to see ladies, by holy walking, demonstrate their election

of God. And her children are joined with her in the apostle's salutation. Families may well be encouraged, and directed in their domestic love and duties. Children may well be noticed in christian letters, it may avail to their encouragement and caution. This lady and her children are notified by the respect paid them by the apostle himself; Whom I love in the truth; and he especially loved those who loved the Lord who loved him. Also by all christians who knew her. Here is the ground of his love and respect to this lady, and her children; for the truth's sake, or true religion's sake. Those who love truth and piety in themselves, should love it in others; the apostle and other christians loved this lady, not for her rank, but her holiness. Religion should dwell within us, in our minds and hearts, in our faith and love. Where religion truly dwells, it will abide for ever.

Sacred love poured out blessings upon this christian family. From God the Father, the God of all grace; the Fountain of blessedness, and of all the blessings that must bring us thither. From the Lord Jesus Christ; he is also Author and Communicator of these heavenly blessings, and he is such a Son as is the Brightness of the Father's glory, and the express Image of his person; who, with the Father, is also eternal life, 1 John 1. 2. From these Divine Persons the apostle craves, Grace—divine favour and good-will, the spring of all good things. It is grace indeed that any spiritual blessing should be

conferred on sinful mortals. Mercy—free pardon and forgiveness: those who are already rich in grace, still need continual forgiveness. Peace—tranquillity of spirit and serenity of conscience, in an assured reconciliation with God, together with all safe and sanctified outward prosperity: these are desired in truth and love; and these blessings will continually preserve true faith and love in the elect lady, and her children.

Ver. 4—6. Happy parent, who was blessed with a religious offspring! The apostle rejoiced greatly that he found her children walking in the truth. It is good to be trained up to early religion! Education may be, and often is blessed, and is the way to fortify youth against irreligion. Also children may be beloved for their parents' sake. It gave great joy to the apostle to see the children treading in their parent's steps, and likely in then turn to be instrumental to support the gospel. May God bless such families more and more, and raise up many to copy their example. How pleasing the contrast to the numbers who diffuse irreligion, infidelity, and vice, among their descendants and in their respective circles. We see here also the rule of true walking—the commandment of the Father. Our walk is true, our converse right, when it is according to the word of God.

Considering what the apostle entreats, the way of address is remarkable: it is not any particular boon or bounty to himself, but common duty and observance of the Divine command; here he might command or charge; but the apostolical spirit is, of all other, the most tender and endearing. Love will often avail where authority will not; and we may often see that the more authority is urged, the more it is slighted. The apostolical minister will love and beseech his friends to their duty. Thus Paul, Philemon 8.

He requests of the lady and her children—christian sacred love. Those who are eminent in any christian virtue, have yet room to grow therein. This love is recommended from the obligation thereto—the commandment, and from the antiquity of the obligation, ver. 5. This commandment of mutual christian love may be said to be a new one, in respect of its new enactment and sanction by the Lord Christ; but yet, as to the matter of

it, mutual holy love, it is old. This love is illustrated from its fruitful nature. And this is the test of our love to God, obedience to him. This is love to our own souls, that we walk in obedience to Divine commands. In keeping them there is great reward. This is love to one another, to engage one another to walk in holiness; and this is the mark of our sincere, mutual, christian love—that we walk after God's commands. The foresight of the decay of this love, as well as of other apostasy, might engage the apostle to inculcate this duty, and this primitive command, frequently and earnestly.

Ver. 7—9. The influence of false teachers would tend to disunite christians, and to pervert the unstable. It was especially needful to watch, for many deceivers were entered into the world. Saddening news to communicate to christian friends, but to fore-warn is the way to fore-arm against trials. The deceiver and his deceit is described; he brings some error concerning the person or office of the Lord Jesus. Such a one is a deceiver and an anti-christ; he deludes souls, and undermines the glory and kingdom of the Lord Christ. He must be an impostor, a wilful deceiver, after all the evidence that Christ has given concerning himself, and the attestation God has given concerning his Son; and he is a wilful opposer of the person and honour and interest of the Lord Christ. Let us not think it strange, that there are deceivers and opposers of the Lord Christ's name and dignity now, for there were such of old, even in the apostles' times.

Care and caution are needful: Look to yourselves, ver. 8. The more deceivers and deceits abound, the more watchful the disciples must be. 1. That they lose not what they have done, or what they have gained. Sad it is, that splendid attainments in the school of Christ should all be lost. 2. That they lose no portion of that honour, or praise, or glory, for which they once stood fair; hold fast that thou hast, in faith and hope and a good conscience, that no man take thy crown; that thou neither lose it, nor any jewel out of it, Rev. 3. 11. The way to attain the full reward is, to abide true to Christ, and constant in religion to the end.

The reason of this care and caution is, 1. The danger and evil of departure from gospel light and revelation; it is in reality departure from God himself. 2. Firm adherence to christian truth unites us to Christ, and thereby to the Father also; for they are one. He only who abides in the doctrine of Christ, is interested in the special love of the Father, and the redemption of his Son. Let us equally disregard such as abide not in the doctrine of Christ and those who transgress his commands.

Ver. 10—13. Any who did not profess and preach the doctrine of Christ, respecting his person, as the incarnate Son of God, and his salvation from guilt and sin, were not to be received. Such men might be relieved in sickness or distress, but are not to be received, noticed, and countenanced so as to sanction their hurtful doctrines. Let us beware that we are not found partakers of their evil deeds, by showing them any countenance or support. Yet in obeying this command we must be careful to manifest kindness and a good spirit, towards

those who differ from us in lesser matters, but hold the all important doctrines of Christ's person, atonement, and holy salvation.

The apostle refers many things to personal conference. Pen and ink may be the means of imparting mercy and pleasure; but a personal interview more so. The communion of saints should be maintained by all methods; and their communion should tend to their mutual joy. Excellent ministers may have their joy advanced by their christian friends. Service and salutation from some near relations are presented. Grace was abundant toward this family; here are two elect sisters, and, probably, their elect children. How will they admire this grace in heaven!

Let us keep at a distance from all persecution and intolerance, while we strenuously assert the difference between the gospel of Christ and the doctrine of every antichrist; between the love due to enemies, and that which belongs to the saints, in communion with whom we find much of our present joy, and an anticipation of eternal happiness.

THE THIRD EPISTLE OF JOHN.

THIS epistle is addressed to a converted gentile, a member of some christian church, called Gaius or Caius, but whether he is either of the three mentioned 1 Cor. 1. 14, Acts 19. 29, and Acts 20. 4, is uncertain. Many suppose him to have been Gaius of Corinth, as hospitality was a leading feature in his character. Rom. 16. 23, and is strongly marked in ver. 5—8, of this epistle. The scope is to commend his steadfastness in the faith and his hospitality, especially to the ministers of Christ; to caution against Diotrephes, and to recommend Demetrius to his friendship.

The apostle congratulates Gaius upon his eminent piety and hospitality, ver. 1—8. Cautions him against siding with Diotrephes, who was a minister of a haughty and turbulent spirit, 9—11. But recommends Demetrius as a man of an excellent character, 12. He excuses the brevity of this letter by the hope of soon seeing Gaius, and concludes with salutations, 13, 14.

Ver. 1—8. The style and spirit of John the apostle seem to shine here. They that are beloved of Christ will love the brethren for his sake. The person saluted and honoured by the letter is notified by his name, Gaius. And by the

kind expressions of the apostle to him—the well-beloved, and whom I love in the truth, for the truth's sake, abiding and walking in the truth, as it is in Jesus. To love our friends for the truth's sake, is true love, religious, gospel love. The salutation contains a prayer, that concerning all things Gaius might prosper, and be in health, even as his soul prospered. He might be a sufferer in body or estate, or in both, and the apostle desired that his life might be prolonged, his designs for usefulness prospered, and his abilities increased. There is such a thing as soul

prosperity—the greatest blessing on this side heaven. Grace and health are two rich companions. Grace will employ health. A rich soul may be lodged in a weakly body; grace must then be exercised in submission to such a dispensation; but we may wish and pray that those who have prosperous souls, may have healthful bodies, that their grace may shine in a larger sphere of activity. How many professors there are, concerning whom the apostle's words must be reversed, and we must earnestly wish and pray that their souls might prosper, as their health and circumstances do! For spiritual languor, and want of vigour and success in every thing conducive to the glory of God, may be observed in numbers, as increasing according to their outward prosperity.

The apostle received a good report concerning this friend, of the consistency of his disposition, discourse, and conduct, with the truths he received and professed. This was evinced by his charity, which includes his love to the brethren, kindness to the poor, hospitality to christian strangers, and readiness to accommodate them for the services of the gospel. True faith will work by love. A good report is due from those who receive good; they could not but testify to the church what they found and felt. The faithful stewards of Christ will at length obtain a good report, nor can they be so concealed as to remain unknown to the church. Good men will greatly rejoice in the soul prosperity of others; and they are glad to hear of the grace and goodness of others. Love envieth not, but rejoiceth in the good name of others. And as it is a joy to good parents, it will be a joy to good ministers to see their people adorn their profession. Gaius was hospitable, kind to the brethren, even to strangers; it was enough that they belonged to Christ; all of the household of faith were welcome to him. He seems to have been of a truly catholic spirit; he could overlook the petty differences among serious christians, and freely help all who bore the image, and did the work of Christ. He was conscientious in what he did, as a faithful servant; and from the Lord Christ such may expect the reward of the inheritance. Such faithful souls can hear their own praises without being puffed up; the commendation of what is good

in them lays them at the foot of the cross of Christ.

It seems to have been customary to attend travelling ministers and christians some part of their road. 1 Cor. 16. 6. It is kindness to a stranger, to guide him in his way; and a pleasure to travellers, to have suitable company. Christians should consider not only what they must do, but what they may do; and should do even the common actions of life and of good-will, after a godly sort, as serving God therein, and designing his glory. These were ministerial brethren, they went forth to preach christianity; they went forth to convert the gentiles; they went forth for God and his name's sake: this is the minister's highest end, and should be his principal spring and motive, to gather and to build up a people for his name: they went forth taking nothing of the gentiles. The gospel should be made without charge to those to whom it is first preached; they who know it not, cannot be expected to value it. Christians are to concur to support the propagation of holy religion in the heathen countries, according to their several capacities. Those who freely communicate Christ's gospel, should be assisted by others to whom God has given the means. The institution of Christ is the true religion, it has been attested by God; they that are true in it and true to it, will earnestly desire, and pray for, and contribute to its propagation in the world. The truth may be befriended and assisted many ways; those who cannot themselves proclaim it, may yet receive, accompany, help, and countenance those who do. That money must be well expended, which promotes the faithful promulgation of the gospel, in any part of the world, and it is to be wished that christians would forward this work, both at home and abroad, more than they do.

Ver. 9—11. Ambition will produce malice against those who oppose it. Malice and ill-will in the heart will be apt to vent itself by the lips. The heart and mouth are both to be watched. The apostle wrote to the church, in commendation of some brethren, but Diotrophes admitted not his letter and testimony. This seems to be the church of which Gaius was a member. To an

ambitious aspiring spirit, apostolical authority or epistles signify but little. The temper and spirit of Diotrephes was full of pride and ambition. It is unseemly to the character of Christ's ministers to love pre-eminence, to affect precedence in the church of God. There were differences among even the early christians, but pastors should seriously consider what differences are not to be borne. The pastor is not lord over God's heritage. It is bad not to do good ourselves; but it is worse to hinder those who would. Church power and church censures are often abused, and some are cast out of the church, who should be received there with welcomes. The apostle would publicly censure this conduct of Diotrephes, and warned Gaius not to imitate his conduct, nor to be influenced thereby. Acts of ecclesiastical domination and tyranny ought to be animadverted upon. Here is dissuasion from copying such a pattern, and indeed any evil at all. Imitate not such; but pursue wisdom, purity, peace, and love. Those cautions and counsels are most likely to be accepted, which are seasoned with love. Follow that which is good, for he that doeth good, as delighting therein, is born of God. Follow not evil. He that pursues it with bent of mind, has not seen God, is not sensible of his holy nature and

Evil-workers vainly pretend or boast acquaintance with God. Let us not follow that which is proud, selfish, and malicious, though the example may be given by persons of eminence; but let us be followers of God, and walk in love, after the example of our Lord, and such as most closely imitate him.

Ver. 12—14. Here is the character of Demetrius; and here his name will

live. A name in the gospel, a fame in the churches, is better than worldly honour. Few are well spoken of by all: and sometimes it is ill to be so. But general integrity and goodness sometimes obtain universal applause. It was deserved and well founded, ver. 12. Some have a good report, but not of the truth itself. Happy they whose spirit and conduct commend them before God and men. It is good to be known for good. We must be ready to bear our testimony to such, and it is well when those who commend can appeal to the consciences of those who know most of those commended.

A little personal conference often spares the time, trouble, and charge of many letters, and good christians may well be glad to see one another. The benediction is, Peace be to you; all happiness attend you. A friend to the propagation of religion deserves a common remembrance. And these pious persons show their friendship to religion as well as to Gaius. The apostle particularly salutes the christians in Gaius' church or vicinity. Greet the friends by name. The lowest in the church of Christ should be greeted. Those may well salute and greet one another on earth, who hope to live together in heaven. And the apostle who had lain in Christ's bosom lays Christ's friends in his heart. We are to notice those who by well-doing put to silence the ignorance of foolish men, and who justly obtain a good report; by associating with and copying the example of such christians, we shall have peace within and live at peace with the brethren; our communications with the Lord's people on earth will be pleasing, and we shall be numbered with them in glory everlasting.

THE GENERAL EPISTLE OF JUDE.

THERE is little mention of Jude in the New Testament, except in the list of the apostles, which states that he was brother of James the less. We have evidences of the authenticity of the epistle in the testimony of a large part of the ancient fathers. In addition, the internal evidence is abundantly satisfactory. The subjects are in every respect worthy of the character of an apostle of Christ. The writer's design was to characterize and condemn false teachers, and to enforce the practice of holiness. *Marknight* truly observes there is no error taught, no evil practice enjoined, for the sake of which alone, an impostor would attempt to impose a forgery on the world.

This epistle is supposed to have been written about A. D. 65, and is addressed generally to all believers in the gospel. Its design appears to be to guard believers against the false teachers

who had begun to insinuate themselves into the christian church, and to disseminate dangerous tenets, by attempting to resolve all christianity into a speculative belief and outward profession of the gospel. Having thus cancelled the obligations of personal holiness, they taught their disciples to live in licentious courses, at the same time flattering them with the hope of eternal life. The vile character of these seducers is shown, and then sentence is denounced, and the epistle concludes with warnings, admonitions, and counsels to believers. There is a great similarity between the epistle of Jude, and the second chapter of the second epistle of Peter.

It shows that whatever doctrines favour the corrupt lusts of men, cannot be of God, let the pleas and pretensions for them be what they may. Errors dangerous to the souls of men soon sprang up in the church. The servants slept, and tares were sown. But such were the wisdom and kindness of Providence, that they began sensibly to appear and show themselves, while some, at least, of the apostles were yet alive to confute them, and warn others against them. We are apt to think, if we had lived in their times, we should have been abundantly fenced against the attempts and artifices of seducers; but we have the testimony and the cautions of the apostles, which are sufficient; and if we will not believe their writings, neither should we have believed or regarded their sayings, if we had lived among them, and conversed personally with them.

The apostle exhorts the christians to stand fast in the faith against those who would undermine it, ver. 1—4. The danger of being infected by them, and the dreadful punishment which shall be inflicted on them and their followers, exemplified in the unbelieving israelites, in the fallen angels, and in Sodom and Gomorrah, 5—7. An awful description of these seducers and their deplorable end, 8—16. Believers cautioned against being surprised at such deceivers arising among them, that they might be forearmed against them by faith and prayer, and prudent care one of another, 17—23. The epistle concludes with an encouraging doxology, 24, 25.

Ver. 1—4. It is more honourable to be a sincere and useful servant of Christ than to be an earthly king. The apostle might have claimed kindred to Christ according to the flesh, but he rather glories in being his servant. Christ himself declared, that he that heareth his word, and doeth it, he only is as his brother, and sister, and mother; more honourably and advantageously related to him than the nearest and dearest natural relatives, considered merely as such. Matt. 12. 48—50.

Christians are the called, called out of the world, the evil spirit and temper of it; called above the world, to higher and better things, heaven, things unseen and eternal; called from sin to Christ, from vanity to seriousness, from uncleanness to holiness; and this in pursuance of the Divine purpose and grace; for whom He did predestinate, them He also called, Rom. 8. 30. Our sanctification is not our own work. If any are sanctified, they are so by God the Father, not excluding the Son or Spirit, for they are one, one God. Our corruption and pollution are of ourselves, but our sanctification and regene-

ration are of God and his grace; if we perish in our iniquity, we must bear the blame; if sanctified and glorified, all the honour and glory must be ascribed to God, and to him alone. The called and sanctified are preserved in Christ Jesus. As it is God who begins the work of grace in the souls of men, so it is he who carries it on, and perfects it. Let us not therefore trust in ourselves, nor in our stock of grace already received, but in him, and in him alone; endeavouring to keep ourselves as ever we would hope he should keep us. All who are preserved, are preserved in Jesus Christ; in him as their Stronghold; no longer than they abide in him, and solely by virtue of their union with him.

The mercy of God is the spring and fountain of all the good we have or hope for; mercy not only to the miserable, but to the guilty. Next to mercy is peace, which we have from the sense of having obtained mercy. We can have no true and lasting peace but what flows from our reconciliation with God by Jesus Christ. As, from mercy springs peace, so from peace springs love; his love to us, our love to him, and our brotherly love to one another. The apostle prays that these may be multiplied, that christians may not be content with a little, or with inferior measure of them; but that their souls and societies may be full of them. God is ready to supply us with all grace, and fullness in each grace. We are not straitened in him, but in ourselves.

The gospel salvation is a common salvation; none are excluded from the benefit of these gracious offers and invitations but those who obstinately, impenitently exclude themselves, Rev. 22. 17. But the application is to all be-

lievers, and only to such. It is to the weak as well as the strong. Let none discourage themselves on account of God's hidden decrees, of which they can know little, and with which they have nothing to do. God's decrees are dark, his covenants are plain. All true believers meet in Christ the common Head, are actuated by one and the same Spirit, are guided by one rule, meet here at one throne of grace, and hope shortly to meet in one common inheritance; a glorious one to be sure, but what or how glorious, we cannot, and at present need not know; it will infinitely exceed all our present hopes and expectations.

This common salvation is the faith once, or at once, once for all, delivered to the saints; to which nothing can be added, from which nothing may be detracted, in which nothing more or less should be altered. Here let us abide; here we are safe. The apostles and evangelists all wrote of this common salvation. This cannot be doubted by those who carefully read their writings. It is strange that any should think they wrote to maintain particular schemes and opinions, especially such as they never did nor could think of. The apostle, though inspired, gave all diligence to write of the common salvation. What then will become of those, who, though uninspired, give no diligence, or next to none, but say to the people, even in the name of God, what comes first into their minds; who, so that they use scripture words, care not how they interpret or apply them!

Those who have received the doctrine of this common salvation, must contend earnestly for it. *Earnestly, not seriously.* The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God, Jam. 1. 20. Lying for the truth is bad, and scolding for it is not much better. Those who have received the truth, must contend for it. But how? As the apostles did; by suffering patiently and courageously for it, not by making others suffer if they will not embrace every notion we call faith, or fundamental. We must not allow ourselves to be robbed of any essential article of christian faith, by the cunning craftiness or specious plausible pretences of deceivers, Eph. 4. 14.

The apostle was inspired to write, to establish believers in the christian faith, and a practice and conversa-

tion truly conformable thereunto, and in an open and bold profession, especially in times of opposition, whether by seduction, or violent persecution. But we must see to it, that it be the christian faith we believe, propagate, and contend for; not the discriminating badges of this or the other party; not any thing of later date than the inspired writings of the holy evangelists and apostles.

Those who deny or corrupt the faith of Christ, and disturb the peace of the church, are here expressly styled ungodly men. Ungodly men raise scruples, start questions, cause divisions, widen breaches, merely to advance and promote selfish, ambitious, and covetous ends. Those are ungodly men who live without God in the world, who have no regard to God and conscience. We ought to contend earnestly for the faith, in opposition to those who would corrupt or deprave it; such as are crept in unawares; glided in like serpents. The more busy and crafty the instruments and agents of Satan, to rob us of the truth, the more solicitous should we be to hold it fast.

Those who turn the grace of God into lasciviousness, are ordained unto condemnation. They sin against the last, the greatest, and the most perfect remedy; and so are without excuse. Those who thus sin, must needs die of their wounds, of their disease; and are of old ordained to this condemnation. Those are to be dreaded and avoided, not only who are wicked by sins of commission, but also who are ungodly by sins of omission; who restrain prayer before God, who dare not reprove a rich man, when it is their duty, but who do the work of the Lord negligently. And they are the worst of ungodly men, who take encouragement to sin boldly, because the grace of God has abounded, and still abounds, so wonderfully, and who are hardened in their impieties by the extent and fulness of gospel grace, the design of which is to deliver men from sin, and bring them unto God. They in effect deny the Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ; as they deny both natural and revealed religion. By their vile unholiness they denied the only Lord God; cast off his authority as their Creator, and that of our Lord Jesus Christ, refusing to have Him rule over them, or to be subjects of his mediatorial kingdom.

4. God decreed that condemnation should not

be but for sin, nor hardening but for preceding rebellion, nor that the wages of death should be paid without the work of sin. No man is ordained to a just punishment but for some sin: the withdrawing of grace, the blindness and obduration of sinners, are the punishments of preceding sin, as appears Rom. 1 27. To crown or to condemn is an act of judicatory power, and proceeds according to the tenour of the revealed gospel. —God never appointed that any should stumble at the word but for their contempt of it. —Never did God make any decree to condemn any man, though he should believe and live righteously. —*Jenky.*

—“Denying our only Master, God, and Lord Jesus Christ.” —*G. Sharpe.*

Ver. 5—7. Outward privileges, profession, and apparent conversion, could not secure those from the vengeance of God, who thus turned aside in unbelief and disobedience. Though we know these things, we still need to know them better. There are many things we have known, which yet we have unhappily forgotten. What are these things of which christians need to be put in remembrance? 1. The destruction of the unbelieving israelites in the wilderness, ver. 5. None ought to presume upon their privileges. They had miracles as their daily bread; yet even they perished in unbelief. We have greater advantages than they had: let their error, their fatal error be our awful warning. 2. The fall of the angels, ver. 6. A great number of the angels were not pleased with the station God allotted to them; they would, with the title of ministers, be sovereigns themselves, do all, and only, what they chose; thus was pride the main and immediate cause or occasion of their fall. Thus they rebelled against their Creator and Sovereign, but God did not spare them. Those who would not be servants to their Maker and his will in their first state, were made captives to his justice. So horribly in the dark are they, that they continue to fight against God! The fallen angels are reserved to the judgment of the great day; and shall fallen men escape it? Surely not. Consider this in due time. The decree, the justice, the wrath of God are the everlasting chains, under which fallen angels are held so fast. 3. The destruction of Sodom: is a particular warning to all to take heed of, and fly from fleshly lusts that war against the soul, 1 Pet. 2. 11; they are now suffering the vengeance of eternal fire; therefore take heed, imitate not their sins. God is the same holy,

just, pure Being, now as then. Stand in awe, therefore, and sin not, Psa. 4. 4. While we contend earnestly for the truths which relate to the person and salvation of Christ, we should guard with equal caution against the abuse of them. Let us not rest in any thing that does not bring the soul in subjection to the obedience of Christ, for nothing but the renewal of our souls to the Divine image by the Holy Spirit, can secure us from being destroyed among the enemies of God.

Consider, especially, this instance of the angels, and see that no dignity and worth of the creature is of any avail; nothing can keep off the strokes of vengeance but the blood of Christ. These were angels, glorious creatures, their sin but one, and probably that in thought; yet how dreadful is their punishment! Cast out of heaven, kept in chains of darkness for a severer vengeance! How then should man tremble, who has drunk in iniquity like water! Surely God is the same, he no less hates pride, obstinacy, and contempt of his grace now, than he did in times past.—(92.)

Ver. 8—16. False teachers are dreamers; a delusion is a dream, and it is the inlet to sin, which is filthiness; it renders men odious and vile in the sight of the most holy God, and makes them vile. The flesh and body is the seat, and often the occasion of vile sins; yet these, though done in and against the body, greatly defile and grievously wound the soul. They are of a disturbed mind and a seditious spirit; forgetting that the powers that be are ordained of God, Rom. 13. 1. They would not endure authority or reproof, but disdained them, as the inhabitants of Sodom disdained the exhortations of Lot.

As to the account respecting the contest relative to the body of Moses, it would appear that Satan wished to make the place of his burial known to the israelites, in order to tempt them to worship him, but he was prevented, and vented his rage in desperate blasphemy. Though this contest was eager and earnest, and Michael was victorious in the issue, yet he would not bring a railing accusation against the devil himself. Why durst he not? He believed God would be offended, if, in such a dispute,

he went that way to work, even with the great enemy of God and man. This should be a memorandum to all disputants, never to bring railing accusations into their disputes. Truth needs no support from falsehood or scurrility. But also learn hence, that we ought to stand up in defence of those whom God owns, how severe soever Satan and his instruments are in their censures. Those who speak evil of religion and godliness, speak evil of the things which they know not, ver. 10; for if they had known them, they would have spoken well of them. Nothing but what is good and excellent can be truly said of religion; and it is sad that any thing different or opposite, should ever be justly said of any of its professors. Men are most apt to speak evil of the persons and things of whom they know least. How many had never suffered by slanderous tongues, if they had been better known! Yet it is hard, if not impossible, to find any enemies to the christian religion, who do not live in open or secret contradiction to the principles of natural religion. This view many think hard and uncharitable, but it will appear true in the day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God. Such are here compared to brute beasts, though they often think and boast themselves the wisest part of mankind. In those things they corrupt themselves; that is, in the plainest and most natural and necessary things; things most open and obvious to natural reason and conscience. The fault lies not in their understandings or apprehensions, but in their depraved wills, and their disordered appetites and affections. They are followers of Cain and Balaam, as atheistical and profane people, who thought little of God or a future world, who proudly disliked the humble obedience of faith, and the spiritual worship God appointed; greedy and covetous, who, so they could but gain worldly advantages, cared not what came next; rebels to God and man, who, like Korah, ran into attempts in which they must assuredly perish. These are spots in your feasts of charity. It is a great reproach, though unjust and accidental to religion, when those who profess it, and join in the most solemn institutions of it, are unsuitable and even contrary to it in heart and life. The Lord will remedy this in his time and way; not

in men's blind way of plucking up wheat with tares. In common eating and drinking holy fear is necessary, much more in what may approach to feasting.

Clouds they are without water; which promise rain in time of drought, but produce none. Light and empty, easily driven about, an easy prey to every seducer. It is amazing to hear many talk confidently of things of which they know little or nothing, yet they have not the wisdom and humility to discern and be sensible how little they know! Such are many professors, who, at first setting out, promise much, like early blossoming trees in a forward spring, but, in conclusion, bring forth little or no fruit. It is sad when men begin in the Spirit, and end in the flesh. Twice dead; their buddings withered and they remain wholly without fruit. They had been once dead in their natural, fallen state; but they seemed to be brought to life again, when they took upon them the profession of the christian religion; but now they are dead again by the evident proofs of their hypocrisy. Plucked up by the roots, dead trees, why cumber they the ground! Away with them to the fire. Raging waves of the sea; boisterous and noisy; with little, if any, sense or meaning. Foaming out their own shame: creating much uneasiness to men of better sense and calmer tempers. Raging waves are a terror to sailing passengers; but when they get into port, the waves are forgotten; their noise and terror are ended. Wandering stars that shift their stations. This allusion is a lively emblem of false teachers, sometimes here and sometimes there. False teachers are to expect the worst punishments in this and a future world. They make a glare sometimes like meteors, and then sink into the blackness of darkness for ever. This terrible expression, with all the horror it imports, belongs to false teachers, who corrupt the word of God, and betray the souls of men. We have no mention of this prophecy of Enoch in any other part or place of scripture; yet one plain text of scripture is proof enough of any point that we are required to believe, especially when relating to a matter of fact. But in matters of faith, necessary saving faith, God has not seen fit, blessed be his holy name he has not, to try us thus far; there is no funda-

mental of the christian religion, truly so called, which is not inculcated very often; by which we may know what the Holy Ghost sets before us as the most important. Christ's coming to judge was prophesied of as early as the middle of the patriarchal age, and was even then received and acknowledged truth. The Lord cometh with his holy myriads; including both angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect. What a glorious time will that be! And we are told that He will come so accompanied and attended to execute judgment upon all. It was spoken of so long ago, as a thing just at hand. And to convince them—Christ will condemn none without trial and conviction; such conviction as shall silence even themselves: they shall have no excuse or apology to make. Notice how often, and how emphatically, the word *ungodly* is repeated, ver. 15; *ungodly men, ungodly sinners, ungodly deeds, and, as to the manner, ungodly committed*. Many now do not at all refer to the terms *godly* or *ungodly*, unless it be to decide even the very expression; but it is not so in the language taught us by the Holy Ghost. Hard speeches of one another, especially if ill-grounded, will certainly come into account at the day of judgment.

These evil men and seducers are murmurers and complainers; such are very weak at least, and for the most part very wicked; they murmur against God and his providence, they are angry at every thing that happens, and never pleased with their own state and condition. Such walk after their own lusts; their will, their appetite, their fancy, are their only rule and law. Those who please their sinful appetites, are most prone to yield to their ungovernable passions. The men of God, from the beginning of the world, have declared the doom that will be denounced on such persons, when Christ shall come with all his saints, to execute judgment on the ungodly. Yet these teachers boasted extravagantly of their knowledge, liberty, and gifts, as if they were the only favourites of Heaven, and they counted and flattered those who were able to promote their secular advantages, seeking to attach worldly men to their party. Such let us avoid.

From the whole of this character of these heretical seducers and false teach-

ers, we learn, that miserable and deplorable is the condition of the misled followers of seducing teachers; the seducer follows his lust, and the follower is led by the seducer. The blind leads the blind. When teachers offer themselves to us, we should consider the character of those who are so officious to lead us, and should follow them only as they follow Christ.—(73)

9 Various opinions have been given as to this dispute respecting the body of Moses. Some consider it is taken from an apocryphal book, or a Jewish legend, and only mentioned as an illustration, but such a quotation hardly would have been made by an inspired penman. Others think that the body of Moses is a figurative expression for the Jewish people or people as Christians are called the body of Christ, and has reference to Zech 3 2. But it seems most reasonable to conclude that Moses was buried by the ministrantion of angels, Deut 34 6, and the spot concealed, lest his remains should be made the object of idolatrous worship.—*Light-foot* however considers it a mere Jewish tradition quoted by the apostle to meet the Jews on their own ground.

14. *Lawrence* has translated from the Ethiopic, the book of Enoch, which was brought from Abyssinia by Bruce, and considers it to have been written by some Jew a short time before the Christian era. It does not appear to have ever been received into the sacred canon, and the quotation of a single passage from it by St. Jude, as *Lawrence* observes, will not prove his approbation of the whole book, more than the quotations from uninspired writers by other apostles; but the book itself is interesting as showing what were the Jewish opinions upon various points, before the birth of Christ. The passage quoted by St. Jude forms what is called ch 2 of the book of Enoch, and is translated by *Lawrence* as follows, 'Behold he comes with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgment upon them, to destroy the wicked, and to reprove all the carnal for every thing which the sinful and ungodly have done and committed against him'

Ver. 17—23. Those who would persuade others, must make it evident that they sincerely love those whom they would persuade. Bitter words and hard usage never did, nor ever will convince, much less persuade any body. The words which inspired persons have spoken, or written, are the best preservative against dangerous errors. The apostles had warned them that under the Christian dispensation, mockers would arise within the Christian church, who would treat sacred truths and important duties with mockery, and bring a scandal on religion by walking after their ungodly lusts. Sensualists separate from Christ, and his church, to the devil, the world, and the flesh, by ungodly courses and

vicious practices ; and that is infinitely worse than separation from any particular branch of the visible church on account of opinions, or modes and circumstances of outward government or worship ; though many can patiently bear with the former, while they are perpetually railing at the latter. Sensual men have not the Spirit, the Spirit of holiness, which whoever has not, does not belong to Christ, Rom. 8. 9. Instead of listening to such deceivers, the apostle exhorted his beloved brethren to be employed in building up themselves in their most holy faith. The doctrine of faith is most holy in its nature and tendency, leading men to repent of sin and hate it, to love and obey God, and to lead a sober, righteous and godly life, by which it may be distinguished from all false doctrines. The grace of faith is most holy, as it works by love, purifies the heart, and overcomes the world, by which it is distinguished from a false and dead faith. Thus the consistency, stability, and circumspection of the believers' conduct will continually advance ; they will the more adorn the gospel, glorify God, and do good to men. Our prayers are most likely to prevail, when we pray in the Holy Ghost, under his guidance and influence, according unto the rule of his word, with faith, fervency, and constant persevering importunity ; this is praying in the Holy Ghost. Thus should they keep themselves in the assurance and comfort of God's special love to them. But eternal life is to be looked for only through mercy ; the mercy of our Lord as Redeemer : all who come to heaven, must come through our Lord Jesus Christ, Acts 4. 12. And a believing expectation of eternal life will arm us against the snares of sin ; a lively faith in this blessed hope will help us to mortify our cursed lusts. We must watch over one another, faithfully, yet prudently reprove each other, and set a good example to all about us. This must be done with compassion, making a difference between the weak and the wilful. Of some we must have compassion, treat them with all tenderness, not be needlessly harsh and severe, nor proud and haughty in our conduct toward them, not averse to reconciliation with them ; if God has forgiven them, why should not we ?

Others save with fear ; urging the terrors of the Lord ; with tender compassions or awful warnings as may be requisite, but cautious, lest while attempting their recovery, we should be ourselves entangled. All such endeavours must be joined with decided abhorrence of the crimes committed by the persons concerned, and care taken to avoid whatever led to, or was connected with fellowship with them, in the works of darkness. Hating even the garment spotted with the flesh, that is, keeping at the utmost distance from what is or appears evil, and designing and endeavouring that others may do so likewise ; we must avoid all that leads to sin, or that looks like sin, 1 Thess. 5. 22, as afraid of being infected by that fatal pestilence.

21. Even human happiness is here ascribed to the mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ. How great must be on whom such a reliance can be securely placed ! Considering his Divine nature and perfections, this style of expression is reasonable and proper, but denying that, it must be absolutely impious.—*J. P. Smith*

Ver. 24, 25. God is able, and as willing as able, to keep us from falling, and to present us faultless before the presence of his glory. Not as those who never have been faulty, but as those whose faults shall not be imputed to their ruin, which, but for God's mercy and a Saviour's sufferings and merits, they might most justly have been. The glory of the Lord will be present ; some look upon it as distant, and many treat it as uncertain, but it will come, every eye shall see him, Rev. 1. 7. This is now the object of our faith, but hereafter, and, surely it cannot now be long, it will be the object of our sense ; whom we now believe in, him we shall shortly see, to our unspeakable joy and comfort, or inexpressible terror and consternation. See 1 Pet. 1. 8. All real sincere believers were given him of the Father, and of all so given him he has lost none, nor will lose any one, but will present them all perfectly holy and happy, when he shall surrender his mediatorial kingdom to his God, and our God ; his Father, and Father. When believers shall be presented faultless, it will be with exceeding joy. Now, our faults fill us with fears, doubts, and sorrows ; but the Redeemer has undertaken for his people, they shall be presented faultless. Where there is no sin, there will be no sorrow ; where there is

the perfection of holiness, there will be the perfection of joy. To him therefore as the only wise God, who knows how to deliver the godly out of temptation, even the Saviour of sinners, the apostle ascribed these Divine attributes. He rejoiced that these belonged to him and would ever vest in him who alone was worthy to possess, and capable of exercising them aright.

Let us more frequently look up to Him, who is able to keep us from falling, to improve as well as maintain the work he has wrought in us, till we shall be presented blameless before the presence

of his glory. Then shall our hearts know a joy beyond what earth can afford; then shall God also rejoice over us, and the joy of our compassionate Saviour be completed, seeing the full accomplishment of the travail of his soul. To him who has so wisely formed the scheme, and will faithfully and perfectly accomplish it, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and for ever, Amen.—(80)

25 "The only wise." Not to exclude the wisdom of the Father and Holy Ghost, but the wisdom of all the creatures. As God the Father is called the only true God, not to exclude the Son and Holy Ghost.—*Jehyn*

THE REVELATION OF ST. JOHN THE DIVINE.

Of the authenticity of the Book of the Revelation there can be no doubt. Yet in the third century it began to be questioned, which seems to have arisen from some notions respecting the millennium, which a few well meaning, but fanciful expositors of that day, endeavoured to support from this book. No one can peruse the Revelation without being forcibly struck by the peculiar sublimity of its composition, so superior to any other writings, that it could only have been written by a man Divinely inspired. It is likewise so suitable as a continuation of the prophecies of Daniel, that the New Testament dispensation would have appeared incomplete without this prophetic book, for it has been the uniform plan of the Divine proceedings, to give a more distinct view of interesting future events, as the time of their accomplishment approaches. A succession of living prophets not having been continued to the church, by this book a succession of prophecy is continued, always speaking to us, especially by the vastly enlarged circulation of the scriptures, since the discovery of the art of printing, and speaking by a witness, whose testimony as to future events cannot be called in question, since so many have already occurred to verify parts of the predictions it contains.

The external evidences for the genuineness of the book of the Revelation, are clearly stated by *T. H. Horne*, from the testimony of the earliest christian writers, which are so strong as fully to satisfy any candid mind that it is to be received as Divine scripture, communicated to the church by John the evangelist. In the words of *Hoodhouse*, "We may see its rise as of a pure fountain, from the sacred rock of the apostolic church. We may trace it through the first century of its passage, flowing from one faithful to another, identified through them all, and every where the same. As it proceeded lower, we see many attempts to obscure its sacred origin, to arrest or divert its course, or lose it in the sands of antiquity, or bury it in the rubbish of the dark ages. We see these attempts repeated in our own times, and by dexterous adversaries, but it has at length arrived to us, such as it flowed forth at the beginning."

The internal evidence is equally indisputable. *T. H. Horne* reduces it to three points, which he states as follows, entering fully into the details. 1. The Apocalypse corresponds in doctrine and imagery with other books of Divine authority. 2. The sublimity of the ideas and imagery is another striking internal evidence of the genuineness and Divine origin of the Apocalypse. 3. The style of the Apocalypse coincides with that of the undisputed writings of St. John.

The time when the Apocalypse was written has also been the subject of considerable discussion, but it is now generally placed about the year A. D. 96 or 97, after John's return from the isle of Patmos, whither he had been banished during the persecution raised by Domitian.

The Book of the Revelation of St. John consists of two principal divisions.

1. Relates to "the things which are," that is, the then present state of the church, and contains the epistle of John to the seven churches, and his account of the appearance of the Lord Jesus, and his direction to the apostle to write what he beheld ch. 1. 9—20. Also the addresses or epistles to seven churches of Lydian or Proconsular Asia. These doubtless had reference to the state of the respective churches, as they then existed, but contain excellent precepts and exhortations, commendations and reproofs, promises and threatenings, which are calculated to instruct the christian church at all times.

2. Contains a prophecy of "the things which shall be hereafter," and describes the future state of the church from the time when the apostle beheld the apocalyptic visions. *Prayer* thus expresses the arrangement recommended by *Vitringa*, and now generally adopted. The series of events is carried on in the Apocalypse, by seven seals opened in their order, seven trumpets sounded in their order, and seven vials poured out in their order. The seven trumpets are the evolution of the seventh seal, the seven vials are the evolution of the seventh trumpet. The seventh vial intro-

duces the millennium, from which period the aspect of the church and the world is uniform until the day of judgment, except a short interruption at the close of the millennium.

This prophecy may be arranged under the following sections:—

1. The representation of the Divine glory, ch. 4
2. The sealed book, and the Lamb that opens it, ch. 5.
3. The opening of the first six seals, ch. 6
4. The scaling of the 144,000, and the presentation of the palm-bearing multitude before the throne, ch. 7.
5. The opening of the seventh seal, and the first six trumpets, and the prophetic commission to John, ch. 8. and 9 including also the vision of the open little book, with the measuring of the temple, and the two witnesses, ch. 10. and 11. 1—14.
6. The sounding of the seventh trumpet; the vision of the woman persecuted by the dragon, and of the wild beasts from the sea and the land, ch. 11. 15—19. ch. 12. and 13.
7. The vision of the Lamb and the 144,000 elect on mount Zion, and the proclamations or warnings, ch. 14.
8. The seven vials; the harlot of Babylon and her fall, ch. 15 to ch. 19. 10.
9. The great conflict, the millennium, the conflict renewed, the judgment, and the new creation, ch. 19. 11—21 and ch. 20.
10. Description of the new Jerusalem, ch. 21. 22 1—5. The conclusion, ch. 22. 6—21.

This second portion of the Apocalypse, according to *Mede*, is the prophecy of Daniel expanded and opened into detail, the great topics being the same, and the termination exactly identical.

Respecting the scope and design of this book, the variety of opinions is almost incredible. No two commentators agree in the interpretation of it, every one forming in some respects a different hypothesis, while no entire exposition has yet been offered in which the cool and cautious inquirer will altogether acquiesce—*Holden*. But this book represents to us as in a small but exact map, the steadiness and exactness of Providence, and Christ's government of the world. For here we see the various and seemingly confused events of providence so exactly methodized, as to make up one uniform and noble piece. Here piety and wickedness, angels and devils, the church and antichrist, act various and contrary parts, and yet Christ makes use of all for noble purposes, and carries all on for one great end—*Fleming*.

No book has been more commented upon, or has given rise to a greater variety of interpretations, than the Apocalypse, which has ever been accounted the most difficult portion of the New Testament. The figurative language in which the visions are delivered; the variety of symbols under which the events are prefigured; the extent of the prophetic information, which appears to include all ages of the christian church, afford little hope of its perfect elucidation till a further process of time shall have unfolded more of the events foretold in it.—*T. H. Horne*

It was wise and proper, by a prophecy in the christian church, to support the minds of good men under afflictions, with assurances of Christ's second coming, and of the watchful providence of God over the cause of true religion in the mean time. Thus the prophecies of this book are of the like use to the christian church, that the prophecies of Christ's first appearance were to the ancient church—and the obscurity of this book is not so much owing to any thing in the book itself, as to the methods taken by several to explain it, and nothing has really so much darkened it, as the common attempts made to interpret it.—*Lowman*.

Although many parts of the Apocalypse are thus obscure, yet enough is clear to convey to us the most important religious instruction. This book is to us, what the prophecies of the Old Testament were to the jews. No prophecies in the Revelation can be more clouded with obscurity than that a child should be born of a virgin, that a mortal should not see corruption, that a person despised and numbered among malefactors should be established for ever on the throne of David. Yet still the pious jew preserved his faith entire amongst all these wonderful, and, in appearance, contradictory intimations. He looked into the holy books in which they were contained, with reverence: and with patient expectation "waited for the consolation of Israel." We, in the same manner, look up to these prophecies of the Apocalypse, for the full consummation of the great scheme of the gospel; when christianity shall finally prevail over all the corruptions of the world, and be universally established in its utmost purity—*Gilpin*. Any impartial reader, if he has been a doubting christian, must gain an assurance; or if atheistically inclined, a conviction, that it was impossible without a Divine prophetic Spirit, to foretell some of the things that have come to pass.—*Wall*.

It is much to be regretted that commentators on this book have usually gone into extremes: they either have attempted to apply all the various symbolical representations, and to interpret them according to some preconceived system, or else they have wholly shrunk from the work, and hastily concluding that all which has been written is conjecture, have assumed merit to themselves for refusing to indulge in a similar course. Thus *Calvin* and *A. Clarke* declined to comment upon this book. Would it not have been preferable to confine themselves to noticing the general bearing of these symbols, according to their usual meaning in scripture, and then to proceed to the application only of those which appear most clearly developed by the lapse of time? And "I verily believe," says *F. Roberts*, "no mortal creature on earth is able fully to understand and penetrate into all the profound depths and mysteries of this book, which has so exercised and puzzled all interpreters, yet if some things therein by help of Divine light may be cleared, though all cannot, he that writes shall be a gainer, and he that reads no loser."

In the present work no attempt is made to offer any thing new, or original. Nor has any attempt been made to examine all that has been written in reference to the Apocalypse even within the last few years; such a course would have been utterly impossible. Yet to leave the symbolical representations without offering any interpretations whatever, or to confine the reader to the views of *Henry* and *Scott* seemed equally unfeasible. The course pursued has been, to retain those writers for the substance of the present comment, but to dismiss their interpretations wherever they appeared to be untenable. Thus some points are left without an

attempt at explanation, which were noticed by those writers, and in several instances views are given from other authors. At the conclusion further remarks are added explanatory of the leading principles adopted by some recent commentators, and in the notes and the comment, more than sixty writers and expositors on this book are quoted or referred to. But the principal aim has been to keep in view what too often is forgotten in the longest and most elaborate treatises on the Apocalypse, namely, the design and object for which assuredly it has been given to the christian church; that, like the other books of scripture, it is intended for our spiritual improvement—to warn the careless sinner, point out the way of salvation to the awakened inquirer, build up the weak believer, comfort the afflicted and tempted christian, and, we may especially add, to strengthen the martyr of Christ under the cruel persecutions and sufferings inflicted by Satan and his followers.

The composition of the book is much like that of Daniel, in that it repeats the same history in varied and enlarged expressions, and exceedingly like Ezekiel, in method and things spoken. The style is very prophetic as to the things spoken; and very hebraizing as to the speaking of them. Exceeding much of the old prophet's language and matter is adduced to intimate new histories, and exceeding much of the jews' language and allusion to their customs and opinions, thereby to speak the things better to be understood—*Lightfoot*. The writer of the Apocalypse employs hebrew phrases, and often has jewish customs and observances in his mind, even in passages where it may be but little suspected.—*Tillotson*.

CHAPTER I.

A preface opens the Divine origin, the design, and the importance of this book, ver. 1—3. The apostle John salutes the seven churches of Asia, 4—8. Declares when, where, and how, the revelations were made to him, 9—12. He gives an account of his vision, in which he saw Christ appear, and describes his appearing in strong and lively figures of majesty and glory, suited to encourage true believers, and to excite the terror of backsliders and apostates, 13—20.

Ver. 1—3. This book is the revelation of Jesus Christ; the whole Bible is so: for all revelation comes through Christ, and all centres in him. Its principal subject is a previous discovery of the purposes of God respecting the affairs of the church, and of the nations as connected therewith, to the end of the world. These events were such as would surely come to pass; and they would begin to come to pass very shortly. Though Christ is himself God, and has light and life in himself, yet, as Mediator between God and man, he receives instructions from the Father. To him we owe the knowledge we have, of what we are to expect from God, and what he expects from us. This revelation Christ sent and signified by his angel. The angels are ministering spirits to the heirs of salvation; they are Christ's servants. John was to deliver this revelation to the church; to all Christ's servants. For the revelation was designed not only for the use of ministers, but for all the members of the church: they all have a right to the oracles of God, and all are concerned in them. The subject-matter of this revelation was, the things that must shortly come to pass.

To all who read or hear the words of

the prophecy, a blessing is pronounced. They are well employed who search the Bible. It is a privilege not only to read the scriptures ourselves, but to hear others, who can lead us to understand them. It is not sufficient that we read and hear, but we must keep the things that are written, in our memories, in our minds, in our affections, and in practice; and we shall be blessed in the deed. The time is at hand; and an acquaintance with this revelation concerning the purposes of God respecting his church to the end of time, when united with humility and sobriety, must greatly benefit the christian. It must enlarge his views of God's providential government, as combined with redemption, and encourage prayer for the prosperous days of the church, and reconcile to events which, although distressing, form a part of the glorious design already partly accomplished. Even the mysteries and difficulties of this book are united with discoveries of God, peculiarly suited to impress the mind with awe, and to purify the soul of the humble and attentive reader, though he may not discern the prophetic meaning. Many, doubtless, read in a wrong spirit, and get harm thereby; but this has been the case with other scriptures, which also are turned to poison by proud and carnal minds. No part of scripture more fully states the gospel, and warns against the evil of sin; and while it becomes us to leave secret things to God, we ought carefully to read, hear, keep, and obey, whatsoever is revealed; for every word of God is pure, and does good to him that walks uprightly.

1 As Christ sustained the character of a prophet in his human nature, God the Father is

spoken of according to the Divine economy, as giving this revelation. Christ's understanding, being infinite as God, did not need such a revelation, but he sent his angel to show these things to the apostle.—*Guyse.*

Ver. 4—8. The blessings pronounced on the seven churches of Asia are grace and peace—holiness and comfort: grace, that is the good-will of God towards us, and his good work in us; and peace, that is the evidence and assurance of this grace. There can be no true peace where there is not true grace; and where grace goes before, peace will follow. This blessing is in the name of God, of the Holy Trinity; it is an act of adoration.

Devout wishes for blessings which God alone can bestow, are indirect prayers, and these blessings are grace, the free favour of the Eternal Majesty to those who have not the least claim to it; deliverance from the greatest evil, and acquisition of the greatest good; being the compassion of infinite Goodness, conferring the noblest gifts of holiness and happiness on the ruined, miserable, and helpless. And peace, the tranquil and delightful feeling which results from the rational hope of possessing these enjoyments. These are the highest blessings Omnipotent Benevolence can give, or a depending nature receive.—(95.)

The Father is first named; he is described as the Jehovah who is, and who was, and who is to come, eternal, unchangeable, the same to the Old Testament church which was, and to the New Testament church which is, and who will be the same to the church triumphant which is to come. The Son and the Spirit are spoken of with relation to their characters and offices, but as possessing all Divine perfections, and as coequal with the Father. The Holy Spirit is called the seven spirits, not seven in number or in nature, but the infinite perfect Spirit of God, in whom there is a diversity of gifts and operations. He is before the throne; as God made, so he governs all things by his Spirit. The Lord Jesus Christ was from eternity, a Witness to all the counsels of God, John 1. 18, and he was, in time, a faithful Witness to the revealed will of God. He is the First-begotten, or First-born from the dead, the only one who raised himself by his own power, and who will by the same power

raise up his people. He is the Prince of the kings of the earth; by him their counsels are overruled, and to him they are accountable. He is the great Friend of his church and people; one who has done great things for them. Animated with a view of the glory of his beloved Lord, contrasting it with his condescension and self-abasement, the inspired writer breaks out in adoring praises to Him who, great and glorious as he was, has loved them, and, in pursuance of that everlasting love, had washed them from their sins in his own blood. Sin leaves a stain of guilt and of pollution upon the soul. Nothing can fetch out this stain but the blood of Christ; and Christ was willing to shed his own blood to satisfy Divine justice, and purchase pardon and purity for his people.

Christ has made believers kings and priests to God and his Father. Having justified and sanctified them, he makes them kings. As such they overcome the world, mortify sin, govern their own spirits, resist Satan, have power, and prevail with God in prayer, and shall judge the world. He has made them priests, given them access to God, enabled them to offer spiritual and acceptable sacrifices; and for these high honours and favours they are bound to ascribe to him dominion and glory for ever. He will judge the world. Attention is called to that great day when all will see the wisdom and happiness of the friends of Christ, and the madness and misery of his enemies. Let us meditate frequently upon the second coming of Christ, in faith and expectation. He will come publicly in his own glory as Mediator, and in the glory of the Father; every eye shall see him, the eye of his people, the eye of his enemies, every eye, yours and mine. He shall come, to the terror of those who pierce him and repent not; and of all who wound and crucify him afresh by apostasy: he shall come, to the astonishment of the pagan world.

This account of Christ is confirmed by himself. He is the Beginning and the End; all things are from him and for him; he is the Almighty; the same eternal and unchanged One. Whosoever attempts to blot out one character of his name, deserves to have his own name blotted out of the book of life. Them that honour him, he will honour;

but those who despise him shall belightly esteemed. No words can more strongly express eternal power and Godhead. And if we would be numbered with his saints in glory everlasting, we must now willingly submit to him, receive him, and honour him as a Saviour, who we believe will come to be our Judge.

How bitter and sore will it be to abide the piercing view of a provoked and slighted Mediator! A hearty consent to Christ's coming to judgment, to have forethoughts of it, and to be longing for it, and wishing that it may come, is a good token of a believer and friend of Christ, to whom this day will be a comfort. Alas, that there should be many who, if they had their mind, would wish never to die, and that there should not be a day of judgment.—(20.)

4. In the eastern style, the perfection of any quality is expressed by the application of the number seven, which came to be regarded as a dignified and sacred number. Thus this expression conveys to us the representation of the One Divine Person, called in scripture the Holy Spirit, in his own original and infinite perfection, in the consummate wisdom of his operations, and the gracious munificence of his gifts.—*J. P. Smith.*

8. "Alpha and Omega," the first and last letters of the greek alphabet, Christ is so called, to denote, that he is the beginning and the ending; the Deviser, the Author, the Preserver, and the holder of all things; and his glory the end of them.—*Brown.*

— It is admitted that the words rendered "which is, and which was, and which is to come," are a paraphrase for Jehovah. Heichy is defined the sense in which the greek word Lord is used when employed to represent the hebrew name Jehovah. There are other explanatory terms added by the writer under the Divine guidance, thus fully defining the meaning of the word, and not leaving it under any uncertainty.—*Tidloch.*

Ver. 9—11. John was, at this time, as the rest of true christians, persecuted for adherence to Christ. If we have the patience of the saints, we should not grudge to meet with their trials. He was a sufferer for Christ's cause, in the isle of Patmos. It was the apostle's comfort that he did not suffer as an evil-doer, but for the testimony of Jesus, for bearing witness to Christ as the Immanuel, the Saviour; and the Spirit of glory and of God rested upon this persecuted apostle. The day and time when he had this vision was the Lord's day, the christian sabbath, the first day of the week, observed in remembrance of the resurrection of Christ.

Let us who call him Our Lord, honour him on his own day.

The name shows how this sacred day should be observed; surely, the Lord's day should be wholly devoted to the Lord, and none of its hours employed in a sensual, worldly, or dissipated manner. And it is a recommendation to the honouring the Lord's day, when we find, as in the instance of John, that on this day, the Lord was pleased to make this glorious manifestation of himself to his servant. This account of Christ's mercies towards the apostle in the day of the Lord, encourages believers to hope that in honouring those holy seasons in the congregation of the faithful, they may be also blest, and in the Spirit on the Lord's day.—(37.)

He was in the Spirit; a serious, heavenly, spiritual frame, under the gracious influences of the Spirit of God. And God usually prepares the souls of his people for uncommon manifestations of himself, by the quickening, sanctifying influences of his good Spirit. Those who would enjoy communion with God on the Lord's day, must endeavour to abstract their thoughts and affections from earthly things. A peaceful conscience, with the consolations of the Holy Spirit, will enable the afflicted christian to be more joyful in communion with God, when immured in a prison, than ungodly men can be in the most prosperous circumstances. And if believers are confined on the Lord's holy day, from public ordinances and the communion of saints, by necessity and not by choice, they may expect great comfort in meditation and secret duties, from the influences of the Spirit; and by hearing the voice and contemplating the glory of their beloved Saviour, from whose gracious visits no confinement or outward circumstances can separate them.

An alarm was given as with the sound of a trumpet, and then the apostle heard a voice, the voice of Christ applying to himself the character before given, the First and the Last, and commanding him to commit to writing the things now to be revealed to him, and to send them to the seven Asian churches, whose names are mentioned.

10 In an extasy and peculiar revelation of the Spirit.—*T. H. Horne.*

— *Baxter* urges that this text proves the extraordinary regard paid to the first day of the week in the time of the apostles, as a day so

holy consecrated to Christ, in memory of his resurrection from the dead.

Ver. 12—20. The apostle turned to see whose voice it was, and whence it came; and then saw a representation of the churches. Christ only is our Light, and his gospel our lamp, but the churches receive their light from Christ and the gospel, and hold it forth to others. They are golden candlesticks, for they should be precious and pure, comparable to fine gold; not only the ministers, but the members of the churches; their light should so shine before men, as to engage others to give glory to God.

The apostle saw a representation of the Lord Jesus Christ in the midst of the golden candlesticks. He is with his churches always, to the end of the world, filling them with light, and life, and love.

This teaches us Christ's care of his church, and that he is set down at the right hand of the throne of God, in very beautiful strong expressions, taken chiefly from the ancient prophets, well suited to confirm the faith and patience of believers, and encourage their perseverance under afflictions and fears.—(89.)

The apostle had been well acquainted with the Saviour while on earth, but now, although having some resemblance of his former person, he was resplendent in glory. He was clothed with a robe down to the feet, perhaps representing his mediatorial righteousness and priesthood. This vesture was girt with a golden girdle, which may denote the preciousness of his love and his affection for his people. His head and hairs white like wool and as snow, may signify his majesty, purity, and eternity. His eyes as a flame of fire, may represent his knowledge of the secrets of all hearts, and of the most distant events. His feet like fine brass burning in a furnace, may denote the stability of his appointments, and the excellency of his proceedings. His voice as the sound of many waters, may represent the power of his word, to remove or to destroy. The seven stars were emblems of the ministers of the seven churches to which the apostle was ordered to write, whom Christ upheld and directed. The sword represented his justice, and his word, piercing to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, Heb. 4. 12. His countenance was like the sun at noon-day,

when it shines most clearly and powerfully; its strength too bright and dazzling for mortal eyes to behold.

The apostle was overpowered with the greatness of the lustre and glory in which Christ appeared. How well it is for us that God speaks to us by men like ourselves! We may well be contented to walk by faith while here upon earth. The Lord Jesus raised him up, he put strength into him, he spake kindly as when on earth. Words of comfort and encouragement; Fear not. Words of instruction; telling him particularly who thus appeared. His Divine nature; the First and the Last His former sufferings; I was dead; the very same whom his disciples saw upon the cross dying for the sins of men. His resurrection and life; I live, and am alive for evermore; have conquered death, and am partaker of endless life. His office and authority; sovereign dominion in and over the invisible world, opening and none can shut, shutting so that none can open; as the Judge of all, from whose sentence there is no appeal.

This lets us see that the price of the believer's redemption is paid. That it is paid by a Brother, who had a human nature, and was like unto us in all things except sin, that Christ who is God is also man. And see here Christ's resurrection and victory over death; so that his purchase is completed and finished, consequently believers shall rise and live for ever through him. Every word here is full of consolation if we know how to fetch it forth.—(20.)

His will and pleasure was, that John should write both the things he had seen, and the things that are, also that should be hereafter. Also declaring that the seven stars are the ministers of the churches; and that the seven candlesticks are the seven churches.

Let us listen to the voice of Christ. lean on his arm, and receive the encouragements of his love, for what can he withhold from those for whose sins he has died? May we then obey his word, and commit ourselves wholly to him who directs all things aight, who will at length raise and change our bodies according to his Almighty power.

13. From the writer of this vision having noted this likeness to the Son of man, we are led to conclude that he was one of the disciples who had seen the Lord in his human appearance. And what John couldst his be at so late

a period as when this revelation was written, but John the apostle and evangelist? The likeness might be preserved, though the appearance was far more glorious than when the Divine Saviour trod the earth in a human form. John had seen his excellent glory, 2 Pet. 1. 17, when he was transfigured, and also beheld him after his resurrection.—*Woodhouse.*

17. The minute accuracy, simplicity, and sublimity of this stupendous representation, must have been drawn from the life; no human fancy could furnish such details.—*Hales.*

CHAPTER II.

Epistles to the churches in Asia, with warnings and encouragements, suitable to their states—to the church at Ephesus, ver. 1-7. At Smyrna, 8-11. At Pergamos, 12-17. And at Thyatira, 18-29.

Ver 1-7. Some things are to be observed alike of all these epistles to the churches. 1. God's writing in this form as a man to his friend, speaks Christ's love to his church. 2. Only one book was written, out of which each church might learn what concerned it. 3. These epistles concerning matters of faith and manners, are written plainly, not in mysterious expressions. 4. The scope of all is to instruct, reprove, command, and comfort. 5. They are all directed to the ministers of the churches, as their heads, but the matter concerns the whole church. Christ, in the beginning of every epistle, describes himself by some one of the things mentioned in the vision in the former chapter.—(54.)

The churches here addressed were in such different states as to purity of doctrine and the power of godliness, that the words of Christ to them will always be suitable to the cases of other churches, and professors of christianity, in all ages and places, to the end of the world. The Lord Jesus directed John what to write, so that these were epistles of Christ. The first is to the angel or messenger and ambassador of Christ to the church of Ephesus, from Him that holdeth the stars in his right hand. The ministers of Christ are under his special care and protection. He directs all their motions, he disposes of them into their several places, he fills them with light and influence, he supports them, or else they would soon be falling stars; they are instruments in his hand, and all the good they do, is done by his hand with them. Christ knows and observes their state; though in hea-

ven, yet he walks in the midst of his churches on earth, observing what is amiss in them, and what they want.

The church of Ephesus is commended for diligence in duty. Christ sets ministers, parents, masters, and seniors, an example of commending what is right in those under their care, and of thus introducing needful reproof. Christ keeps an account of every hour's work his servants do for him, and their labour shall not be in vain in the Lord. But it is not enough that we are diligent; there must be bearing patience, to endure the injuries of men, and the rebukes of Providence; and there must be waiting patience, that when we have done the will of God, we may receive the promise. And though we must show all meekness to all men, yet we must show just zeal against their sins. This zeal was commended, because it was according to knowledge, upon a trial of the pretences, practices, and tenets of evil men; those that impartially search after truth, may come to the knowledge of it. Thus Christ noticed their patience and persevering labours from regard to his name.

Those that have much good in them may be found to have something amiss in them; our Lord Jesus, as an impartial Master and Judge, notices both. The sin Christ charged this church with, is, not the having left and forsaken the object of love, but having lost the fervent degree of it that at first appeared. The first affections of men toward Christ, and holiness, and heaven, usually are lively and warm; but they abate and cool, if not preserved in constant exercise. Christ is grieved and displeased with his people, when he sees them grow remiss and cold toward him. Surely this single mention in scripture, of christians forsaking their first love, awfully reproves those who speak of it with carelessness, and thus try to excuse indifference and sloth in themselves and others, or who would represent that believers will become less fervent in spirit as a matter of course. Though the aged flourishing christian may feel less vigour of affection than he has done at some times, yet there is far more constancy and energy in his love, more efficacious warmth and heat. While the affections are lively and fervent, sometimes services are engaged in, and habits of exertion, self-denial, and opposi-

tion to reproach are formed, which, as to outward conduct at least, are persevered in, and often conscientiously, when the heart is not thoroughly engaged as once it was. Many are aware that this is their case, and perhaps silence the remonstrances of conscience by it; but our Saviour plainly considers the indifference as criminal.

They must compare their present with their former state, and consider how much peace, strength, purity, and pleasure they have lost, by leaving their first love; how much better they could bear afflictions, and how much more they could enjoy the favours of Providence; how much easier the thoughts of death, and how much stronger their desires and hopes of heaven. They must repent; they must be grieved and ashamed for their sinful declining; they must blame themselves for it, and humbly confess it in the sight of God. They must endeavour to revive and to recover their first zeal, tenderness, and seriousness, and must pray as earnestly, and watch as diligently, as when they first set out in the ways of God. This good advice is urged by a severe threatening. If it should be neglected, he would deprive them of the light of the gospel, and the advantage of its ordinances. If the presence of Christ's grace and Spirit be slighted, we may expect the presence of his displeasure.

Encouraging mention is made of what was good among them. The Nicolaitanes, under the name of christianity, held hateful doctrines, and were guilty of deeds hateful to Christ, and to all true christians; and it is mentioned to the praise of the church of Ephesus, that they abhorred those wicked doctrines and practices. Indifference as to truth and error, good and evil, may be called charity and meekness, but it is not so; and it is displeasing to Christ.

In the conclusion of this epistle, we have an emphatical call to attention. We cannot employ our hearing better than in hearkening to the word of God; and they who will not hear the call of God now, will wish they had never had the power of hearing. The christian life is a warfare against sin, Satan, the world, and the flesh. We must never yield to our spiritual enemies, but fight the good fight, and the warfare and victory shall have a glorious triumph and reward. All

who persevere shall derive from Christ, as the Tree of life, perfection and confirmation in holiness, and happiness, not in the earthly paradise, but the heavenly.

This is a figurative expression, taken from the account of the garden of Eden, denoting the pure, satisfactory, and eternal joys of heaven; and the anticipation of them in this world, by faith, communion with Christ, and the consolations of the Holy Spirit. Every victory over temptation would be rewarded with foretastes of this fruit. It is a great mistake to say that looking to the reward makes a soul servile; on the contrary, it makes it free and willing. There cannot be a greater promise or encouragement for duty, than the happiness God has provided for his people in heaven, and the frequent mention of this is to make believers bear difficulties patiently, and wade through them willingly. Believers, take your wrestling life here, and expect and look for a quiet life hereafter, but not till then; the word of God never promises quietness and complete victory here.—(20)

2. Christ knows the thoughts, the secret springs of action, and the whole moral character of men. The knowledge thus asserted in the solemn message to each of the churches, is clearly shown to include the most perfect acquaintance with the sincerity or hypocrisy of individuals, and with all the complication of human feelings and actions. This is real omniscience, and is again asserted in the strongest and plainest terms, ver. 23, and we find in ver. 6, and elsewhere, the Lord Jesus purifying, correcting, and rewarding the professors of religion, in pursuance of his perfect knowledge of their hearts and characters. The very nature of the acts specified, implies a complete dominion over the arrangements of providence in the present life, and its fullest powers in reference to the future state.—*J. P. Smith*

Christ ordered the seven epistles to be sent to the seven churches, ch. 1. 11, therefore, though directed to the pastors, the churches themselves are to be considered as concerned and included in them.—*Guyse*.

7 This admonition, added at the close of each epistle to the churches, intimates that the things written therein are to be applied to all other churches in every place and age.—*Guyse*.

Ver. 8—11. The preface to the church in Smyrna contains another glorious title of our Lord Jesus. He is the First, for by him all things were made; he was before all things, with God, and God himself. He is the Last, for he will be the Judge of all. This is the title of God, from everlasting to everlasting, and it is the title of one that is an

unchangeable Mediator between God and man, Jesus, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. He was dead, died for our sins, and by dying purchased salvation for us: he is alive, he rose again for our justification, and by his life applies this salvation to us. And if when enemies we are reconciled by his death, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. As this First and Last, who was dead and alive, is the believer's Brother and Friend, he must be rich in the deepest poverty, honourable amidst the lowest abasement, and happy under the heaviest tribulation.

After a declaration of Christ's perfect knowledge of all the works of men, it is noticed that those who will be faithful to Christ, must expect to go through many tribulations; but in all their afflictions he is afflicted, and he will recompense to them that are troubled, rest with himself. And they had made improvement in their spiritual state. This comes in by a short, yet very emphatical expression; "but thou art rich." Many who are rich in temporals, are poor in spirituals, and some who are poor outwardly, are inwardly rich; rich in faith, in good works, rich in privileges, rich in gifts, rich in hope, rich in reversion. Spiritual riches are usually the reward of diligence; the diligent hand makes rich. Where there is spiritual plenty, outward poverty may be well borne, and when God's people are impoverished in temporals, for the sake of Christ and a good conscience, he makes all up to them in spiritual riches.

He knows the wickedness and the falsehood of their enemies; who pretend to be the people of God, as the Jews boasted themselves to be, even after God had rejected them. These may say they only are the church of God in the world, when, indeed, they are the synagogue of Satan. As Christ has a church in the world, the spiritual Israel of God, so the devil has his synagogue; assemblies that promote and propagate errors, in opposition to the purity and spirituality of gospel-worship. God is greatly dishonoured, when his name is used to promote the interests of Satan: he will take just revenge on those who persist in this blasphemy. The people of God must look for a succession of troubles in this world; they had been

impoverished by their tribulations before, now they must be imprisoned. Tyrants and persecutors are the devil's tools, though they gratify their own sinful malignity. Christ fore-arms them against these approaching troubles. Fear none of these things; not only forbid slavish fear, but subdue it, furnishing the soul with strength and courage. Their sufferings were but for a set time, and a short time; it should not be everlasting tribulation. It should be to try them, not to destroy them; that their faith, and patience, and courage, might be proved, and purified; and a glorious reward is proposed and promised.

Observe, the sureness of the reward; "I will give thee." they shall have the reward from Christ's own hand; none of their enemies shall be able to wrest it out of his hand, or to pull it from their heads. Also the suitableness of it; a crown to reward their fidelity and their conflict. "A crown of life;" the life worn out in his service, or laid down in his cause, shall be rewarded with a much better life, which shall be eternal. All men, all the world, are called upon to hear what passes between Christ and his churches; how he commends them, how he comforts them, how he reproves their failures, how he rewards their fidelity. It concerns all the inhabitants of the world to observe God's dealings with his own people; all the world may learn instruction and wisdom thereby. Here is a gracious promise to the conquering christian, ver. 11. The second death is unspeakably worse than the first death, both in the agonies of it—which are the agonies of the soul, without any mixture of support; and in the duration—it is eternal death, to die, and to be always dying. From this destructive death, Christ will save all his faithful servants; the first death shall not hurt them, and the second death shall have no power over them. If a man may be kept from the second death and wrath to come, he may patiently endure whatever he meets with in this world.

10. "Ten" appears here not to be intended literally for that exact number of days or years, but for an indefinite number.—*Guyse*.

The word "crown" is used by our translators for both the "*stephanos*" and the "*diadem*." The "*diadem*," *Falkhurst* states to have been a swathe, or fillet of white linen, bound about the heads of the ancient eastern kings—and as the ensign of royal authority this word is used,

ch. 12. 3; 13. 1; 19. 12. The "stephanos" was a crown or garland, bestowed on the victors in combats, or given to conquerors, as 2 Tim 4 8. See *Blacknight*. This occurs, ch 2 10; 3. 11; 4. 4, 10, 6. 2. 9. 7; 12. 1; 11. 14.

11. The second death, is an expression peculiar to the Apocalypse. Irenæus, who lived very near the time of St. John, explained it to mean the Gehenna, or eternal fire, the place of punishment for incorrigible sinners.—*Woodhouse*

Ver. 12—17. In the titles of Christ prefixed to the several epistles, there is something suited to the state of each. The church of Pergamos was infested with men who corrupted both faith and practice; but the word of God is a sword able to slay both sin and sinners. It is a sharp sword; no heart is so hard but it is able to wound it, no knot so closely tied but it is able to cut it: it can divide asunder between the soul and the spirit—between the soul and those sinful habits which by custom seem to be essential. It is a sword with two edges; it turns and cuts every way; but the believer need not fear this sword, yet this confidence cannot be supported without steady obedience.

As our Lord notices all the advantages and opportunities we have for duty in the places where we dwell, so he notices our temptations and discouragements from the same causes. This people dwelt where Satan's seat was. Pergamos was not only a very wicked city, but the head-quarters of persecution and heresy. Yet, even in this perilous situation, the church had not denied the faith, either by open apostasy or by temporizing to avoid the cross. Christ commends their steadfastness, ver. 13. The grace of faith has made thee thus faithful, thou hast not denied the great doctrines of the gospel, nor departed from the christian faith. Usually on that rock on which men make shipwreck of their faith, they make shipwreck of a good conscience. They had been steadfast even when Antipas the faithful martyr was slain among them; of this person we have no certain account; but he was a faithful disciple of Christ, for whom he suffered martyrdom.

Christ reproves their sinful failures. Some taught it was lawful to eat things sacrificed to idols, and drew men into impure practices, as Balaam did the israelites; corrupt doctrines and a corrupt worship often lead to a corrupt conversation; and an erroneous view of gospel doctrine

and christian liberty constituted the root of bitterness from which their evil practices grew. Repentance is the duty of churches and communities as well as particular persons; those who sin together, should repent together. And no sword cuts so deep as the sword of Christ's mouth. If the threatenings of the word are set home upon the conscience of a sinner, he will soon be a terror to himself. The word of God will take hold of sinners sooner or later, either for their conversion or their confusion.

Here is the promise of great favour to those that overcome. The hidden manna, the influences and comforts of the Spirit of Christ in communion with him, comes down from heaven into the soul, from time to time, for its support, to let it know in some degree how saints and angels live in heaven. This is hidden from the rest of the world; a stranger intermeddles not with this joy, and it is laid up in Christ, the Ark of the covenant, in the holy of holies. The new name is the name of adoption: adopted persons took the name of the family into which they were adopted: none can read the evidence of a man's adoption but himself; he cannot always read it; but when the Holy Spirit illuminates his own work in the believer's soul, this new name and its real import are discerned and understood by him; he knows himself to be a child and heir of God. It may signify eternal happiness, but the enjoyment of it rather refers to present consolations, as the gracious recompence of victory over particular urgent temptations.

17. Many consider the allusion here is to the stones used for balloting in judicial proceedings, to declare guilt or innocence, but *T. H. Horne* thinks a tessera is alluded to, which was a stone shaped in the form of an oblong square, divided into two parts, upon each of which, one of two parties wrote his name, and exchanged it with the other. Each party, and their descendants, on producing these at the house of the other, were received and hospitably received. These tokens were kept with much care and privacy, that they might not be used by others. This practice, it is known, prevailed among the ancient christians. *Valpy* thinks, it referred to the judges, who presented to conquerors in the games, a white stone, assigning and containing the name and the prize of him that conquered.

Ver. 18—29. The epistle to Thyatira, was sent by the Son of God, described as having eyes like a flame of fire, and feet like as fine brass; as he judges

with perfect wisdom, so he acts with perfect strength and steadiness. Even when the Lord knows the works of his people to be wrought in love, faith, zeal, and patience; yet if his eyes, which are as a flame of fire, observe them committing or allowing that which is evil, he will rebuke, correct, or punish them. Here is commendation of this ministry and people, by one well acquainted with the principles from which they acted. There is no religion where there is no charity. Also of their service, their ministration; the officers of the church laboured in the word and doctrine. Their faith, the grace that actuated both their charity and their service. Their patience; those most charitable to others, most diligent, and most faithful, must yet expect to meet with that which will exercise their patience. Their growing fruitfulness; their last works were better than the first; this is an excellent character; when others left their first love and lost their first zeal, these grew wiser and better. It should be the earnest desire of all christians that their last works may be their best works.

Yet this church connived at some wicked seducers. These are compared to Jezebel, and called by her name. They used the name of God to oppose the truth of his doctrine and worship. They abused the patience of God to harden themselves in their wickedness. Repentance is necessary to prevent the sinner's ruin. Where God gives time for repentance, he expects fruits meet for repentance. Where the space for repentance is neglected, the sinner perishes with double destruction. The punishment of this seducer is described, ver. 22, 23. I will cast her into a bed, not of pleasure, but into a bed of flames; and they who have sinned with her, shall suffer with her: but this might yet be prevented by their repentance. I will kill her children with death, that is, the second death, which leaves no hope of a life of future happiness. God is known by the judgments he executeth; and by this upon seducers, he would make known his infallible knowledge of the hearts of men, of their principles, designs, frame, and temper; their formality, their indifference, their secret inclinations to symbolize with idolaters. Also his impartial justice; the name of

christians should be no protection, their churches should be no sanctuaries for sin and sinners. Encouragement then is given to those who kept themselves pure and undefiled. These seducers called their doctrines, depths, profound mysteries; endeavouring to persuade the people that they had deeper insight into religion than their own ministers. Christ called them depths of Satan, satanical delusions and devices, diabolical mysteries. It is dangerous to despise the mystery of God, and it is as dangerous to receive the mysteries of Satan. Let us beware of these depths of Satan, of which those who know the least are the most happy. How tender Christ is of his faithful servants! His yoke is easy, and his burden is light. He lays nothing upon his servants but what is for their good. Christ is coming to end all the temptations of his people; and if they hold fast and a good conscience till he comes, all the difficulties and dangers are over.

In the conclusion, there is full promise of an ample reward to the persevering, victorious believer; also knowledge and wisdom, suitable to their great power and dominion. Christ is the Morning-star; he brings day with him into the soul, the light of grace and of glory; and he will give his people the perfection of light and wisdom, requisite to the state of dignity and dominion they shall have in the morning of the resurrection. Christ will visit his victorious disciples with glory in the presence and enjoyment of him then Lord and Saviour. This epistle ends with the usual demand of attention. In the foregoing epistles, this demand comes before the concluding promise; but in this and all that follow, it comes after, and tells us, that we should all attend to the promises as well as to the precepts Christ delivers to the churches. After every victory let us follow up our advantage against the enemy, that we may overcome and keep the works of Christ unto the end, and at last have glory, honour, and happiness, beyond all our present conceptions. Let this often be thought of, under the animating idea of receiving power and authority from the Son of God, according to what he has received from the Father, as the fruit of his conflicts and victories; being made partakers of his happiness, abid-

ing for ever in his presence, and having him for our everlasting light and glory.

CHAPTER III.

Epistles, to the church at Sardis, ver. 1-6; at Philadelphia, 7-13; and at Laodicea, 14-22.

Ver. 1-6. In the message to Sardis, the Lord Jesus is He that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; that is, the Holy Spirit with his various powers, graces and operations, for he is in person one, though in operation various. This epistle being sent to a languishing ministry and church, they are fitly put in mind that Christ has the Spirit without measure, and in perfection, to whom they may apply for the revival of his work. The Holy Spirit usually works by the ministry, but the ministry will be of no efficacy without the Spirit; and it implies a command to ministers to take heed to themselves and their doctrine. And when He who has the fulness of the Spirit, and who rules over all means and instruments, reproves, counsels, or commands, his words imply the promise of assistance to all who obediently attend to them.

Christ here begins with a severe reproof. Hypocrisy, and lamentable decay in religion, are sins charged upon this church, by One who knew her well, and all her works. This church had a name, and a very honourable one; every thing appeared well as to the observation of men. But there was a form of godliness, and not the power; a name to live, but not a principle of life. There was a great deadness in their souls, and in their services; numbers were wholly hypocrites, others were in a very disordered and lifeless state. Our Lord called upon them to be vigilant in guarding against their enemies, and to be active and earnest in their duties, and to endeavour, in dependence on the grace of the Holy Spirit, to revive and strengthen the faith and spiritual affections of those yet alive to God, though in a declining state. Whenever we are off our watch, we lose ground. And it is difficult to keep up to the life and power of godliness, when universal deadness and declension prevail around us. I have not found thy works perfect before God, not filled up; there is something wanting

in them: there is the shell, but not the kernel; there is the carcase, but not the soul; the shadow, but not the substance; the inward thing is wanting, thy works are hollow and empty; prayers are not filled up with holy desires, alms-deeds not filled up with true charity, sabbaths not filled up with suitable devotion of soul to God; there are not inward affections suitable to outward acts and expressions; when the spirit is wanting, the form cannot long subsist. And not only to remember what messages they had received from God, what tokens of his mercy and favour toward them, but what impressions the mercies of God made upon their souls at first, what affections they felt under the word and ordinances; Where is the blessedness they then spake of? Also to hold fast what they had received, that they might not lose all. In seeking a revival in our own souls, or the souls of others, it is incumbent to compare our profession with our proficiency, that we may be humbled and quickened to hold fast that which remains. Christ enforces his counsel with a dreadful threatening if it should be despised. His approach as a Judge to a dead declining people will surprise; their deadness will keep them in security, and, as it procures an angry visit from Christ, it will prevent their discerning and preparing for it. He will come, to strip them of their remaining enjoyments and mercies, in justice and righteousness, taking away all that which they have forfeited.

Yet our blessed Lord does not leave this sinful people without some comfort and encouragement. He makes honourable mention of the faithful remnant in Sardis, he makes a very gracious promise to them; They shall walk with me in white; for they are worthy; in the white robes of justification, and adoption, and comfort; in the white robes of honour and glory in the other world. They shall walk with Christ in the heavenly paradise; and what delightful converse will there be when they thus walk together! This is an honour which it is no way unbecoming Christ to confer; though not a legal, but a gospel worthiness is ascribed to them; not merit, but meekness. A great reward is promised to the conquering christian. He that overcometh shall be clothed in white raiment: the

purity of grace shall be rewarded with the perfect purity of glory. To this is added another very suitable promise. Christ has his book of life, a register of all who shall inherit eternal life: the book of remembrance of all who live to God, and keep up the life and power of godliness in evil times. Christ will not blot the names of his chosen and faithful ones out of this book of life; men may be enrolled in the registers of the church, as making a profession, and that name may be blotted out when it appears it was but a name to live, without spiritual life. Such often lose the very name before they die, they are left of God to blot out their own names by their gross and open wickednesses; but the names of those that overcome shall never be blotted out. Christ will produce this book of life, and confess the names of the faithful, before God, and all the angels; he will do the former as their Judge, when the books shall be opened; and the latter as their Head, presenting them to the Father; Behold, I and the children that thou hast given me! How great will this honour and reward be! The demand of universal attention finishes the message: every word from God deserves attention from men; and that which may seem particularly directed to one body of men, has something instructive to all.

Ver. 7-13. The letter for Philadelphia was from the same Lord Jesus. He that is holy in his nature, cannot therefore but be true to his word, for he hath spoken in his holiness. He hath the key of government and authority in and over the church. He opens a door of opportunity to his churches, he opens a door of utterance to his ministers; he opens a door of entrance, opens the heart; he opens a door of admission into the visible church, and he opens the door of admission into the church triumphant. He shuts the door of opportunity, and the door of utterance; and leaves obstinate sinners shut up in the hardness of their hearts. He shuts the door of heaven against the foolish, who sleep away their day of grace; and against the workers of iniquity, how vain and confident soever they may be. He has power to open the kingdom of heaven to the souls of his people when removed by death, and to open their

graves and bring forth their bodies glorious and immortal, that they may be reunited to their souls in everlasting happiness. He performs these acts in absolute sovereignty, and none can hinder. These were proper characteristics for Christ, when speaking to a church that endeavoured to be conformed to him in holiness and truth. Christ is the author of all the liberty and opportunity his churches enjoy. He notices how long he has preserved their spiritual privileges. Wicked men envy the people of God their door of liberty, and would be glad to shut it against them. But if we do not provoke Christ to shut this door against us, man cannot do it.

This church is commended; yet with a gentle reproof. Although Christ accepts a little strength, yet believers should not rest satisfied in a little, but should strive to grow in grace, to be strong in faith, giving glory to God. Obedience, faithfulness, and a free confession of the name of Christ, are the fruits of true grace, and are pleasing to Christ as such. Even if we have but little strength, yet if we have kept his word, he will not let any enemy prevail. Assemblies that worship God in spirit and in truth, are the Israel of God; assemblies that worship false gods, or the true God in a false manner, are the synagogues of Satan. They shall be convinced that this church is in the right, and is beloved of Christ, and they shall desire to worship the same God after the same manner. This great change shall be wrought by the power of God upon the hearts of his enemies, and by discoveries of his peculiar favour to his church. The greatest honour and happiness any church can enjoy, consist in the peculiar love and favour of Christ. Christ can discover this his favour to his people, in such a manner that their enemies shall be forced to acknowledge it. This, by the grace of Christ, will soften their enemies, and make them desire to be admitted into communion with his people.

Christ promises preserving grace in the most trying times, as the reward of past fidelity; To him that hath shall be given. The gospel of Christ sets before men the exemplary patience of Christ, in all his sufferings for a sinful world; it calls those who receive it to the exercise of patience in conformity to

Christ. They must keep up to the faith and practice and worship prescribed in the gospel. A day of gospel peace and liberty is a day of God's patience; it is seldom so well improved as it should be, therefore is often followed by an hour of trial and temptation. Sometimes the trial is general and universal; and when it is so, it is usually the shorter. Those who keep the gospel in a time of peace, shall be kept by Christ in an hour of temptation; by keeping the gospel they are prepared for the trial; and the same Divine grace that has made them fruitful in times of peace, will make them faithful in times of persecution. Christ calls the church to that duty he promised he would enable her to do; to persevere. The duty is, Hold fast that which thou hast; that faith, that truth, that strength of grace, that zeal, that love to the brethren; thou hast been possessed of this excellent treasure, hold it fast. The motives are taken from the speedy appearance of Christ; he is coming to relieve under the trial, to reward fidelity, and punish those who fall away. Our Saviour promises a glorious reward to the victorious believer: He shall be a monumental pillar in the temple of God; a monument of the free and powerful grace of God, a monument that shall never be defaced nor removed, as many stately pillars erected in honour of emperors and generals have been. On this monumental pillar there shall be an honourable inscription: The name of God, in whose cause the believer engaged, whom he served, and for whom he suffered in this warfare; and the name of the city of God, the church of God, the new Jerusalem which came down from heaven. Thus all would know to what city the victor belonged, and that he was entitled to all the privileges of a heavenly inheritance. The Lord promised to write upon him his own new name, even that of Emmanuel, Jesus, the Redeemer of sinners, which he has newly assumed, in addition to his former titles of Christ, and Lord of all worlds. And written on this pillar shall be the new name of Christ, the Mediator, the Redeemer, the Captain of our salvation; by this it will appear under whose banner the conquering believer was enlisted, under whose conduct he acted, by whose example he was encouraged, and under whose influence he

fought the good fight, and came off victorious. The epistle is closed with the demand of attention; He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches, how Christ loves and values his faithful people, how he commends, and will crown their fidelity.

8. "And none can shut it." The original is more general than the use of the word man would imply.—*Scholmheld.*

Ver. 14—22. Laodicea was the last and worst of the seven churches of Asia. Here our Lord Jesus styles himself, The Amen, one steady and unchangeable in all his purposes and promises. Him that is Truth in himself. The faithful and true Witness, whose testimony of God to men ought to be received and fully believed, and whose testimony of men to God will be fully believed and regarded, and will be a swift but true witness against all indifferent lukewarm professors. The Beginning or Chief of the creation of God; of the first creation. He is the first Cause, the Creator and the Governor of the world. Of the second creation, the church; he is the Head of that body, the First-born from the dead. Christ, rising by his own Divine power, as the Head of a new world, raises dead souls to be a living temple and church to himself.

A heavy charge is made against this church, by one who knew them better than they knew themselves. If religion be worth any thing, it is worth every thing; indifference here is inexcusable. Here is no room for neutrality. Christ expects men should declare themselves in earnest. How many professors of evangelical doctrine, are neither hot nor cold, excepting as their indifference in essential matters is strongly contrasted with a hot and fiery spirit of disputation about things of inferior moment. A severe punishment is threatened. Lukewarm professors turn the heart of Christ against them; they may call their lukewarmness charity, meekness, moderation, and largeness of soul; but it is nauseous to Christ, and makes them so; they shall be finally rejected with disgust. While they were called by his name, and reluctantly performed a scanty measure of outward duties, with evident indifference, and weariness in them; their evil tempers, unholy actions, and attachment to the

world, and to its pleasures, company, and interests, dishonoured Christ more than their apostasy could do; and in the end would be equally fatal to their souls. Thus they would give numbers a false opinion of christianity, as if it were an unholy religion, while others would conclude it could afford no real satisfaction, otherwise its professors would not have been so heartless in it, or so ready to seek pleasure or happiness from the world.

One cause of this indifference and inconsistency in religion is, self-conceit and self-delusion; Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, ver. 17. What a difference between the thoughts they had of themselves, and the thoughts that Christ had of them!

They were well provided for as to their bodies, and that made them overlook the necessities of their souls. And they thought themselves well furnished in their souls; they had learning, and they took it for religion; they had gifts, and they took them for grace; they had knowledge, and they took it for true wisdom; they had ordinances, and they rested on them instead of the God of ordinances. How careful should we be not to put a cheat upon our own soul! There are many in hell, that once thought themselves to be far in the way to heaven. Let us daily beg of God that we may not be left to flatter and deceive ourselves. It is a general rule, that professors grow proud as they become carnal and formal. Christ had mean thoughts of them, their state was wretched in itself. They were poor; really poor, when they said and thought they were rich; their souls were starving in the midst of their abundance; not only poor as all men are by nature, but poor as professors of the gospel. They were blind; they could not see their state, nor their way, nor their danger, and yet they thought they saw; the very light that was in them, was darkness; and then how great must that darkness be! They could not see Christ, though evidently set forth as crucified before their eyes; they could not see God by faith, though always present in them; they could not see death, though it was just before them; they could not look into eternity, though they stood upon the very brink of it. They had neither the garment of

justification, nor of sanctification; they were always exposed to sin and shame, their righteousnesses were but filthy rags; these were rags, and would not cover them; filthy rags, and would defile them; and they were naked, without house or harbour, for they were without God, in whom alone the soul of man can find rest and safety, and all suitable accommodations. The riches of the body will not enrich the soul; the sight of the body will not enlighten the soul; the most convenient house for the body will not afford rest or safety to the soul; the soul is wholly different from the body, and must have accommodation suitable to its nature, else in the midst of bodily prosperity it will be wretched and miserable.

Good counsel was given by Christ to this sinful people. Happy they who take his counsel, for all others must perish in their sins. These people were poor; Christ lets them know where they might have true riches, and how they might have them. Even wretched and miserable sinners might obtain these invaluable blessings—he invites them to himself. And how must they have this true gold from him? They must buy it. How can they that are poor buy gold? As they may buy of Christ wine and milk; that is, without money and without price, Isa. 55. 1. Something indeed must be parted with, but it is nothing valuable; and it is only to make room for receiving true riches. Come to Christ with a sense of your poverty and emptiness, part with sin and self-sufficiency, that you may be filled with his hidden treasure. These people were naked; Christ tells them where they might have clothing to cover the shame of their nakedness. They must receive from Christ the white raiment he purchased and provided for them; his own imputed righteousness for justification, and the garments of holiness and sanctification. They were blind; their own wisdom and reason are but blindness in the things of God; let them resign themselves to his word and Spirit, and their eyes shall be opened to see their way and their end, their duty and their true interest. A new and glorious scene would then open itself to their souls; and this light would be marvellous to those now delivered from the powers of darkness. This wise and good counsel Christ gives to

careless souls. Let us examine ourselves by the rule of his word, and pray earnestly for the teaching of his Holy Spirit, to take away our pride, prejudices, and worldly lusts, that we may learn our own real character and situation, and the preciousness of his salvation, so as to value it more suitably.

Great and gracious encouragement to this sinful people, to take the admonition and advice that Christ had given them, is added in true and tender affection. Sinners ought to take the rebukes of God's word and rod, as tokens of his love to their souls, and should accordingly repent in good earnest, and turn to him that smites them. If they would comply with his admonitions, he was ready to make them good to their souls. He stood without, knocking by the dispensations of his providence, the warnings and instructions of his word, and the convincing influences of his Spirit; thus requiring them to receive and entertain him. Thus Christ is still graciously pleased by his word and Spirit to come to the door of the hearts of sinners. The heart of man is by nature shut against Christ by ignorance, unbelief, and sinful prejudices. When he finds the heart shut, he waits to be gracious. He uses means to awaken sinners, and to cause them to open to him; he calls by his word, he knocks by the impulses of his Spirit upon their conscience. They who open to him shall enjoy his presence. If what he finds would make but a poor feast, what he brings will amply supply a rich one. He will give fresh supplies of graces and comforts, and thereby stir up fresh actings of faith, and love, and delight; and in all this Christ and his people will enjoy pleasant communion with each other. Alas! what do careless, obstinate sinners lose by refusing to open the door of the heart to Christ! and how many are of the Laodicean stamp in every place!

In the conclusion is a promise to the overcoming believer. Christ himself had temptations and conflicts; he overcame them all, and was more than a conqueror. As the reward of his conflict and victory, he sat down with God the Father on his throne, possessed of the glory he had with the Father from eternity, but which he was pleased to conceal on earth. Those conformed to Christ in his trials, shall be conformed

to him in glory; they shall sit down with him on his throne of judgment at the end of the world, on his throne of glory to all eternity, shining by virtue of their union with him, and relation to him, as the mystical body of which he is the Head. All is closed with the general demand of attention, putting all to whom these epistles shall come in mind of what is contained in them. And as there will be a resemblance in all succeeding churches to these, both in their graces and sins, so they may expect that God will deal with them as he dealt with these, which are patterns to all ages, of what faithful and fruitful churches may expect to receive from God, and what the unfaithful may expect to suffer from his hand. And let God's dealings with his churches put the rest of the world upon considering, If judgment begin at the house of God, what shall the end of them be that do not obey the gospel of Christ! 1 Pet. 4. 17. Thus end the messages of Christ to the churches of Asia—the epistolary part of this book.

What was written being appropriate to the respective characters and conditions of these communities, was peculiarly fitted to benefit them. But whether we examine these or any other portions of the Bible, we perceive that the counsels they present, while admirably suited to the societies or individuals among whom they originated, make up a system of Divine instructions which may be universally applied, and all men are so deeply interested in their design, that the summons so frequently repeated in these epistles can never become obsolete. "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches"—*Mur*

22 An opinion has been held by some commentators of note, which may be given in the words of *Vittinga*, "That under this emblematical representation of the seven churches of Asia, the Holy Spirit has delineated seven different states of the christian church, which would appear in succession, extending to the coming of our Lord, and the consummation of all things. That this is given in descriptions taken from the names, states, and conditions of these churches, so that they might behold themselves, and learn both their good qualities and their defects, and what admonitions and exhortations were suitable for them." *Vittinga* has given a summary of the arguments which may be alleged in favour of this interpretation. Some of them are ingenious, but they are not now considered sufficient to support such a theory. *Gill* is one of the principal of the English com-

mentations who adopt this view, that "they are prophetic of the churches of Christ, in the several periods of time until he appears again." He applies them as follows, finding also some allusion in the name of each, to the age described. Ephesus represents the church in the apostolic age, and under the abatement of the fervency of the love of the primitive christians towards the close of that state. Smyrna represents the state under the persecutions of the roman emperors, expressing the bitter afflictions and persecutions of that interval. Pergamos, the church from the time of Constantine, rising up to great riches and honour, introducing the popes and their haughty actions and corruptions. Thyatira takes in the darkest and most superstitious times, to the Reformation. Sardis, the state from the Reformation to the reign of Christ, being emblematical of the reformed churches. Philadelphia, the period in which will be the spiritual reign of Christ. Laodicea, from the end of the spiritual reign of Christ till his coming to judge the quick and dead, when there will be formality, spiritual sloth, and security. *Griddlestone* makes another division as to the eras signified, by causing them to end previously to the millennial period.

THE PRESENT STATE OF THE SEVEN CHURCHES

Ephesus, in the time of the romans, was the metropolis of proconsular Asia. This celebrated city, the vast remains of which give a high idea of its former beauty, extent, and magnificence, is situated in that part of Asia anciently called Ionia, (but now Natolia,) about five miles from the Aegean sea, on the sides and at the foot of a range of mountains overlooking a fine plain watered and fertilized by the river Cayster. Ephesus was particularly celebrated for the temple of Diana, a most magnificent edifice, erected at the common expense of the inhabitants of Asia Proper, and reputed one of the seven wonders of the world; but the very site of this magnificent and celebrated edifice is now undetermined, though some stupendous columns in the large mosque, there is reason to believe, once graced that structure. Widely-scattered and noble ruins attest the splendour of the theatre mentioned in Acts 19, 31, built on mount Prion. The loud shouts of the immense multitude reverberated from the neighbouring mount Coissus, would augment the uproar occasioned by the populace rushing into the theatre. Just below it is the public place where the law proceedings were going forward, to which the town clerk referred Demetrius and his companions. In the time of St Paul, this city abounded with orators and philosophers; and its inhabitants, in their gentle state, were celebrated for their idolatry and skill in magic, as well as for their luxury and licentiousness. The present state of Ephesus affords a striking illustration of the accomplishment of prophecy. After a protracted struggle with the sword of Rome, and the sophisms of the gnostics, Ephesus at last gave way. The beginnings of indifference, censured by the warning voice of the prophet, increased to a total forgetfulness; till at length the threatenings of the Apocalypse were fulfilled, and Ephesus sunk with the general overthrow of the Greek empire in the fourteenth century. Ephesus is now in a state of almost total ruin, innumerable inscriptions are lying about in disorder or neglect, or built into the

turkish structures. The plough has passed over the city; and in March 1826, green corn was growing in all directions, amidst the forsaken ruins; and one solitary greek only was found, who bore the christian name, instead of its once-flourishing church. Where once assembled thousands exclaimed, "Great is Diana of the ephesians," now the eagle yells, and the jackal moans. As for the stork, the ruins of Ephesus are her house. This bird is seen perching in all directions upon the summits of the buildings, or hovering round them in the air, or fixing its immense nest, like the capital of a column, on the large masses of ruins.

Smyrna, a city of Asia Minor, is situated about forty miles to the north of Ephesus. It is still celebrated for the number, wealth, and commerce of the inhabitants. Its population is estimated at about 75,000 inhabitants, 45,000 are turks, 15,000 greeks, 8,000 armenians, 8,000 jews, and less than 1,000 europeans. There are more than twenty mosques in Smyrna, and three Greek churches, and the jews have several synagogues. The angel of the church of Smyrna, addressed in the second apocalyptic epistle, is supposed to have been Polycarp, the disciple of St. John, by whom he was appointed bishop of Smyrna. As he afterwards suffered much, being burnt alive at Smyrna, A. D. 166, the exhortation in Rev. 2, 10, would be peculiarly calculated to support and encourage him. Smyrna will ever interest the real christian. On the firmness of the early martyrs depended, under Divine Providence, the transmission of the truth to the latest generations.

Pergamos was the ancient metropolis of Mysia, and the residence of the attalian kings; it still preserves many vestiges of ancient magnificence. Against the church at Pergamos, was adduced the charge of instability, Rev. 2, 14, 15, but to its fertile faith was promised the all-powerful protection of God. The errors of Balaam and the nicolaitanes have been purged away. Pergamos has been preserved from the destroyer; and three thousand christians (out of a population of about 15,000 inhabitants) now cherish the rites of their religion in the same spot where it was planted by the hands of St. Paul, though, alas! their religion has little in common with the faith taught by the apostle, but the name and profession. Of these christians, about 200 belong to the armenian communion; the remainder are members of the greek church. They have each one church, but the other churches of Pergamos have been converted into mosques, and are profaned with the blasphemies of the false prophet, Mohammed. There are also about 100 jews, who have a synagogue. Pergamos, or Beigamo, as it is now called, is about sixty-four miles north of Smyrna.

Thyatira, a city of Asia Minor, is a considerable city in the road from Pergamos to Sardis, about forty-eight miles eastward of the former. It is called by the turks, Akhisar, and is embosomed in cypresses and poplars; it is now, as anciently it was, celebrated for dyeing, and large quantities of cloths, dyed scarlet, are sent weekly to Smyrna. In 1826, the population was estimated at 300 greek houses, 30 armenian, and 1000 turkish. The two former have churches. The streets are narrow and dirty.

Sardis, the metropolis of the region of Lydia, in Asia Minor, is situated near mount Tmolus, between thirty and forty miles east from

Smryna. It was celebrated for great opulence, and for the voluptuous and debauched manners of its inhabitants. Considerable ruins still attest the ancient splendour of this once celebrated capital of Croesus and the Lydian kings, which is now reduced to a wretched village, called Sait, consisting of a few mud huts inhabited by Turkish herdsmen. A great portion of the ground once occupied by this imperial city, is now a smooth grassy plain, browsed over by the sheep of the peasants, or trodden by the camels of the caravan; and only a few disjointed pillars, and the crumbling rock of the Acropolis, remain to point out the site of its glory. The ruins are more entirely gone to decay than in most of the ancient cities in those parts. No Christians reside on the spot: two Greek servants of a Turkish miller, in 1826, were the only representatives of the church at Sardis; the present state of which affords a striking illustration of the accomplishment of the prophetic denunciation against the church in that city—A name to live, while dead.

Philadelphia is situated about twenty-seven miles to the south-east of Sardis, on a rising ground beneath the snowy mount Tmolus. The houses are embosomed in trees, which gives a pleasing effect to the scene. Not long before the date of the apocalyptic epistle, this city had suffered so much from earthquakes, that it had been in a great measure deserted by its inhabitants; which may in some degree account for the poverty of this church, as described in this epistle. Philadelphia appears to have resisted the attacks of the Turks in 1312, with more success than the other cities. At a distance from the sea, forgotten by the emperor, encompassed on all sides by the Turks, her valiant citizens defended their religion and freedom above four score years, and at length capitulated with the proudest of the Ottomans, Bajazet, in 1390. In these words, Gibbon, the sceptical historian, bears a testimony, perhaps unconsciously, to the truth of scripture: he states, that "among the Greek colonies and churches of Asia, Philadelphia is still erect; a column, a pillar, in a scene of ruins." Whatever may be lost of the spirit of Christianity, there is still the form of a Christian church in this city, which is now called "Allah Shalah," or the "City of God." It contains about 1000 Christians, chiefly Greeks, most of whom speak only the Turkish language. They have twenty-five places of public worship, five of which are large and regular churches, with a resident bishop and inferior clergy. In twenty others of a smaller description, the Greek liturgy is read once a year. The lamp still exists, but where is its oil? When the very epistle to their own church is read, they understand it not! The remains of antiquity here are not numerous.

Laodicea is about forty-two miles to the south of Ephesus. This city was often damaged by earthquakes, and restored either by the opulence of its inhabitants, or by the magnificence of the Roman emperors. From the researches of modern travellers, it appears to have been seated on a volcanic hill, of moderate height, but of considerable extent. Its ruins attest that it was large, opulent, and splendid; and there are still to be seen the remains of an amphitheatre, an aqueduct, and many other buildings. In the primitive time of Christianity, as appears from St. Paul's epistle to the Colossians, in which the Laodiceans are twice mentioned,

this place possessed a flourishing church. But the doom of Laodicea seems to have been more severe and terrible than that of the other six apocalyptic churches, as its state was more degraded; and its present condition is in striking conformity with the rebukes and threatenings of God. Not a single Christian resides at Laodicea! Not even a Turk has a fixed residence on the spot. A fox, discovered by its ears peeping over a brow, was the only inhabitant seen by Chandler. It is even more solitary than Ephesus: the latter has a prospect of a rolling sea, or a whitening sail, to enliven its decay: the former sits in widowed loneliness. Its temples are desolate: the stately edifices of ancient Laodicea are now peopled only by wolves and jackals. The prayers of the Moslem are the only prayers heard near the still splendid ruins of the city, on which the prophetic denunciation seems to have been fully executed in its utter rejection as a church. "Its crime was pride: its punishment, desolation. Infidelity itself must confess that the menace of the scriptures has been executed and accomplished; it now stands rejected of God, and deserted of men; its glory a ruin, its name a reproach."—*From Hartley, Arundell, Emerson, and T. H. Horne.*

CHAPTER IV.

The apostle having finished the epistolary part of his revelation, relating to the then present and near approaching state of the seven churches of Asia, proceeds to open the prophetic scene represented to him in another vision, relating to the more general affairs of the church for times to come, to the end of the world. This is introduced with his vision of God, as on his glorious throne, around which were twenty-four elders and four living creatures, ver. 1-8. Whose songs, and those of the holy angels, he heard, 9-11.

Ver. 1-8. After the Lord Jesus had instructed the apostle to write to the churches "The things that are," another vision was communicated in which heaven was shown to him. This forms an introduction to the prophetic part of the book. Whatever is transacted on earth is first designed and settled in heaven: and we can know nothing of future events but what God is pleased to discover to us. So far as God reveals his designs to us, we are to receive them. And there is a way opened into the holiest of all, into which the sons of God may enter by faith and holy affections, even now. Yet we must not intrude into the secrets of God's presence, but stay till we are called to them. The apostle was, as to his own apprehension, admitted to the immediate presence of God. All bodily actions and sensations were suspended, and his

spirit was possessed with the spirit of prophecy, and wholly under Divine influence. The more we abstract ourselves from earthly things, the more fit we are for communion with God; the body is a cloud and a clog to the mind in its transactions with God. We should forget it when we go before the Lord in duty, that we may go up to him in heaven. The apostle saw a throne set in heaven, emblematical* of the universal dominion of Jehovah; all earthly thrones are under this throne that is set in heaven. He saw a glorious One upon the throne. His countenance was like a jasper and a sardine stone; he is not described by any human features, so as to be represented by a likeness or image, but only by his transcendent brightness. These seem emblems of the excellence of the Divine nature, and of God's awful justice. He saw a rainbow about the throne, like unto an emerald. The rainbow was the seal and token of the covenant of providence that God made with Noah and his posterity with him, and is a fit emblem of that covenant of promise which God has made with Christ, as the Head of the church, and with all his people in him. The prevailing colour was a pleasant green, showing the reviving and refreshing nature of the new covenant; and that God's dispensations, as the Sovereign of all worlds, had respect to his covenant of peace, and engagements of love to his people. The apostle saw four and twenty* seats round the throne, filled with four and twenty elders, representing, probably, the whole church of God, both in the old testament and in the new testament state. Their sitting denotes their honour, rest, and satisfaction; their sitting about the throne, signifies their nearness to God, the sight and enjoyment they have of him. They are clothed in white raiment; the imputed righteousness of the saints and their sanctification; they have on their heads crowns of gold, signifying the glory they have with him. All these may, in a lower sense, be applied to the gospel church on earth, in its worshipping assemblies; and, in a higher sense, to the church triumphant in heaven. For though the whole church militant was thus represented as well as the church triumphant, yet the whole has relation to the security of the state of true christians, their glorious privi-

leges, and the honour to which the Lord will advance them.

Lightnings and voices proceeded out of the throne; the awful declarations God makes to his church of his sovereign will and pleasure. Thus he gave forth the law on mount Sinai; and the gospel has not less glory and authority than the law, though it is of a more spiritual nature. Seven lamps of fire were burning before the throne, explained to be the seven Spirits of God. The gifts, graces, and operations of the Spirit of God in the churches of Christ, are all dispensed according to the will and pleasure of him who sits upon the throne. Before the throne was a sea of glass like unto crystal. In the temple there was a great vessel of brass filled with water, called a sea, in which the priests were to wash when they ministered before the Lord; but in the gospel church, the laver for purification, is the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, who cleanses from all sin. In this all must be washed, that are admitted into the gracious presence of God on earth, or his glorious presence in heaven. The apostle saw four animals, living creatures, between the throne and the circle of the elders, standing between God and the people. These seem to signify the true ministers of the gospel, because of their situation between God and the people, and because fewer in number than the people. This also is shown by the description here given: by their many eyes, denoting sagacity, vigilance, and circumspection; by their lion like courage: their labour and diligence, in which they resemble the ox; their prudence and discretion becoming men; and their affections and contemplations, by which they mount up with wings like eagles toward heaven: and these wings full of eyes within, show that in all their meditations and ministrations they are to act with knowledge, and especially should be well acquainted with the state of their own souls, watching over them as well as the souls of the people; and by their continual employment, praising God, and not ceasing to do so night and day. The elders sit, and are ministered unto; these stand, and minister—they rest not. Through their labours, as instruments, converted sinners, in every part of the earth, from age to age, continually bless and glorify God, and worship at his

mercy seat; and the threefold repetition of the word "Holy," seems to intimate the Trinity of Persons in the Godhead, to which reference is made, which Person soever is immediately addressed; and the coeternal Divinity of each, as the "Lord God Almighty," who was, and is, and is to come. If we are baptized with the enlightening, purifying, and transforming influences of the Holy Spirit, washed in the pure fountain of the Redeemer's blood, and clothed with the robe of his righteousness, we shall ere long have done with conflict and suffering, receive the victor's honourable crown, and join the adoration of these heavenly worshippers.

1 "After these things."—*Woodhouse*. The allusions are drawn from Jewish objects, and especially from the ceremonial of the temple service. And it was proper to predict the events which should befall the Christian church, under the cover of Jewish ideas; the law itself, as St. Paul states, having presented the shadow of that future dispensation.—*Hurd*

2 No external objects were presented to the senses of the prophets, in their visions, but the natural use of all their functions being suspended, their minds were supernaturally impressed with the ideas of such things as were particularly suited to illustrate the subjects they were employed to reveal. It is not to be supposed that the objects afterwards mentioned have a real existence in heaven; but they were visionary emblems, suited to give instruction, as it were, in his holy places.—*T. Scott*.

3 *John* considers that the scene of this vision was the sanctuary, which place appears to be alluded to in other parts of this vision, as ch. 11, 1; but says, if this book has reference to the typical and symbolical services and furniture of the tabernacle, it must be for the purpose of yielding information from them in reference to the Antitype.

Something like the interior of the temple was displayed to the apostle.—*Hutchinson*.

3 Pliny describes the jasper as a pellucid watery gem. It is spoken of, ch. 21, 11, a clear as crystal, whence it has been supposed to be the diamond. The sardine stone had a red fiery glow.

5 Not the candlesticks or receptacles of ^{the} lights, as in ch. 1, 12, but the lights themselves. The same imagery occurs, *Zechar* 4, where the angel refers to the Spirit. Thus it is in harmony with other passages of prophetic scripture, that the seven lamps of fire before the heavenly throne, imitated by the seven-branched candlestick in the earthly temple, represent the Holy Spirit of God.—*Woodhouse*.

6 "And before the throne, as it were, a sea, glassy, like unto crystal."—*Woodhouse*. The rendering "Zan," by the word "beasts," is a very unhappy translation; "Laying creatures," is the proper term. *Crotty* says, They resemble the cherubim and seraphim of Isaiah and Ezekiel, and the lion, the bull, the man, and the eagle are probably emblematical representations of the supremacy, strength, wisdom, and clemency of Providence.

Ver. 9—11. In heaven there is not only that to be seen, which will highly please a sanctified eye, but there is that to be heard which will greatly delight a sanctified ear. This is true concerning the church of Christ here, and it will be eminently so in the church made perfect in heaven. The apostle heard the song of the four living creatures. He heard the adorations of the four and twenty elders; the ministers led, and the people followed, in the praises of God. There is but one God, and he alone, as God, is worshipped by the church on earth and in heaven, with humility, reverence, and godly fear. They gave God the glory of the holiness wherewith he had crowned their souls on earth, and the honour and happiness with which he crowns them in heaven. All true believers wholly ascribe their redemption and conversion, their present privileges, and future hopes, to the eternal and most holy God.

Thus rise the eternal, harmonious, thankful songs of the redeemed in heaven. Would we imitate them here on earth, let our praises be constant, not interrupted; united, not divided; thankful, not cold and formal; humble, not self-confident and presumptuous.—(74.)

They say, Thou art worthy to receive glory. God was exalted far above all blessing and praise; he was worthy to receive glory, but they were not worthy to praise, nor able to do it according to his infinite excellencies. What can any creature pretend to give unto God? He is the Creator of all things; and none but the Creator of all things should be adored. He is the Preserver of all things; no dependent being must be set up as an object of religious worship. He is the final cause of all things. He made all things at his pleasure, for his pleasure, and to glorify himself by them. If these are true and sufficient grounds for religious worship, as they are proper to God alone, Christ must be God, one with the Father and Spirit, and be worshipped as such; for we find the same ascribed to him, Col. 1, 16, 17. All things were created by him and for him; he is before all things, and by him all things consist.

CHAPTER V.

The apostle saw in the right hand of God a book sealed with seven seals, which could be opened by none but Christ, ver. 1—5. Who,

appearing under the emblem of a Lamb in the midst of the throne, took the book to open it, 6, 7. Upon which the four living creatures and four and twenty elders ascribe all honour to him, as worthy to open it, and for redeeming them to God by his blood, and making them kings and priests to him. 8-10. And an innumerable company of angels join with them in another song of praise to God and the Lamb, 11-14.

Ver. 1-7. The apostle saw a book in the hand of him that sat upon the throne, a roll of several parchments according to the form usual in those times; it was full of writing, and sealed with seven seals. This represented especially those secret purposes of God which were about to be revealed. The designs and methods of Divine Providence, toward the church and the world, are stated, fixed, and every thing made a matter of record. This book of God is known to none but himself, till he allows it to be opened. It is sealed with seven seals. The counsels of God are laid with inscrutable secrecy, impenetrable to the eye and understanding of the creature. The several parts are not unsealed and opened at once, but successively, till the whole mystery of God's counsel and conduct is finished in the world.

The voice of the head a proclamation concerning this sealed book, ver. 2. If there be any creature who thinks himself sufficient, either to explain or execute the counsels of God, let him make the attempt. No one in heaven or earth could undertake the task: none of the glorious holy angels, though before the throne of God, and the ministers of his providence; they, with all their wisdom, cannot dive into the decrees of God; none on earth; no man, not the wisest or the best of men; not even the prophets of God, any further than he reveals his mind to them; none under the earth; none of the fallen angels, none of the spirits of men departed, though they should return to our world, can open this book. Satan himself, with all his subtlety, cannot do it. The creatures cannot open it, nor read it, God only can do it. John felt great concern, it was a great disappointment to him. Those who have seen most of God, are most desirous to see more; and those who have seen his glory, desire to know his will. But even good men may be too eager and hasty to look into the

mysteries of the Divine conduct. Such desires, not presently answered, turn to grief and sorrow.

If John wept much because he could not gain an insight into the book of God's decrees, what reason have many to shed floods of tears on account of their ignorance of the gospel of Christ! of that which he who runs may read—of that on which everlasting salvation depends. Let such cease not to weep and to pray till God has revealed the glorious mysteries it contains—(61.)

The apostle was comforted and encouraged to hope this sealed book should yet be opened. One of the elders spoke to St. John. God revealed it to his church. We need not weep that we cannot foresee future events respecting ourselves in this world; the eager expectation of future prospects, or the foresight of future calamities, would alike unfit us for present duties and conflicts, or render our prosperous days distressing. Yet we may properly desire to learn, from the promises and prophecies of scripture, what will be the final event to believers and to the church; and in both respects the Incarnate Son has prevailed, that we should have all the information we need. Here let us remark what contrary excellences unite in the Redeemer; while as a Lion he protects his people, even as a Lamb he is most formidable to his enemies. The whole universe never could show, in any other instance, such a union of unsearchable riches and deep poverty, of Divine dignity and the deepest humiliation, of majesty and meekness, of holiness and love, to sinners, of justice and mercy, of honour and happiness, with patient endurance of the most complicated sufferings. The Lord Jesus Christ would open this book. He is called the Lion of the tribe of Judah, according to his human nature, alluding to Jacob's prophecy; and the Root of David, according to his Divine nature, through a branch of David, according to the flesh. He who is God and man, and bears the office of Mediator between God and man, is fit and worthy to open and execute all the counsels of God toward men. And this he does as Mediator, and as the King and Head of the Israel of God; and he will do it, to the consolation and joy of all his people.

Christ stands as Mediator between

God and both ministers and people. He is called a Lion; but he appears as a Lamb slain. It is an emblematical representation of the Saviour's high priesthood before God, in our nature, as risen from the dead, through the merit of his sacrifice in behalf of all who come to the Father through him; it was in consequence of that atonement, which the sacrificing of spotless lambs had prefigured from the beginning, that he prevailed to open the book. He is a Lion, to conquer Satan; a Lamb, to satisfy the justice of God. He appears with the marks of his sufferings upon him, to show that he intercedes in heaven, in the virtue of his satisfaction. He appears as a Lamb, having seven horns and seven eyes: perfect power to execute all the will of God, and perfect wisdom to understand it all, and to do it in the most effectual manner; for he hath the seven Spirits of God; he has received the Holy Spirit without measure, in all perfection of light, and life, and power, by which he is able to teach and rule all parts of the earth. He came, and took the book out of the right hand of Him that sat on the throne; he prevailed to do it by his merit and worthiness: he did it by authority, and by the Father's appointment. The Father put the book of his eternal counsels into the hand of Christ, and Christ readily and gladly took it into his hand; for he delights to make known the will of his Father, and the Holy Spirit is given by him to reveal the truth and will of God to apostles and prophets.

1. Written within, and sealed on the back (See note ch. 6. 1.)

6 The Divine nature of our Lord is unchangeable, and incapable of suffering; it was as man that he bore our griefs and carried our sorrows, and the efficacy of those sufferings in promoting the salvation of man is derived from the union of his human nature with the deity. The fact of the Lamb being slain, and redeeming us to God by his blood, is a proper foundation of homage to him, who, though he could not die, took the nature which could, and did.—*J. P. Smith.*

-- Seven is a number expressive of universality, fulness, and perfection; and as a horn is emblematical of power, so the seven horns of the Lamb signify his Omnipotence, as the seven eyes signify his Omnipresence and his Omniscience.—*Foodhouse.*

Ver. 8—14. When Christ received this book out of the Father's hand, then he received the adorations of angels and men, yea, of every creature. It is just matter of joy to all the world, to see

that God deals with men in grace and mercy through the Redeemer. He governs the world, not merely as a Creator and Lawgiver, but as our God and Saviour. All the world has reason to rejoice in this.

The song of praise that was offered up to the Lamb on this occasion consists of three parts: one by the church, another by the church and the angels, the third by every creature. The church begins—the christian people and their ministers lead. The object of their worship is the Lamb, the Lord Jesus Christ. It is the declared will of God, that all men should honour the Son as they honour the Father; for he has the same nature. They gave him, not an inferior worship, but the most profound adoration, and thus rendered him Divine honours, even in the immediate presence of the Father's glory. The harps were instruments of praise, the vials were full of odours or incense, which signify the prayers of the saints; prayer and praise should always go together. The matter of their song was suited to the new state of the church, the gospel state introduced by the Son of God. They adored Christ as actually come, as having finished his work on earth by his sacrifice on the cross, and as entered into his mediatorial glory. They acknowledge the infinite fitness and worthiness of the Lord Jesus, for this great work of opening and executing the counsel and purposes of God. They do not exclude the dignity of his person as God, without which he had not been sufficient for it; yet his sufferings, which he had endured for them, more sensibly struck their souls with thankfulness and joy. Thou wast slain, slain as a sacrifice, thy blood was shed. The fruits of his sufferings were their redemption to God. Christ has redeemed his people from the bondage of sin, guilt, and Satan; redeemed them to God, set them at liberty to serve him. Every ransomed slave is not preferred to honour; but though the elect of God were made slaves by sin and Satan, in every nation of the world, Christ not only purchased liberty for them, but the highest honour and preferment, made them kings and priests; kings, to rule over their own spirits, and to overcome the world, and the evil one; and he has made them priests: given them access to himself, and liberty to

offer up spiritual sacrifices, and they shall reign on the earth; they shall with him judge the world at the great day.

The song of praise, thus begun by the church, is carried on by the angels, in conjunction with the church; they are said to be innumerable, attendants on the throne of God, and guardians to the church. Though they did not need a Saviour themselves, yet they rejoice in the redemption and salvation of sinners; and they agree with the church, in acknowledging the infinite merits of the Lord Jesus as dying for sinners. He is worthy of that office and that authority which require the greatest power, wisdom, and all excellency, to discharge them aright: and he is worthy of all honour, and glory, and blessing, for he is sufficient for the office, and faithful in it.

This glorious song, thus begun by the church, and carried on by the angels, is echoed by the whole creation; all the creatures adore that great Redeemer, who delivers the creature from that bondage under which it groans, through the corruption of man, and the just curse denounced by the great God upon the fall. The part, that by figurative personification is given to the whole creation, is a song of blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, to Him that sits on the throne, to God, as God; or to God the Father, as the first Person in the Trinity, and the first in the work of our salvation; and to the Lamb, as the second Person in the Godhead, and the Mediator of the new covenant. Not that the worship paid to the Lamb is an inferior worship, for the very same honour and glory are ascribed to the Lamb, and to Him that sits on the throne, and their essential nature being the same; but their parts in the work of our salvation being distinct, they are distinctly adored. We worship and glorify one and the same God, for our creation and for our redemption. What words can more fully and emphatically declare that Christ is, and ought to be, worshipped equally with the Father, by all creatures, to all eternity? The church that began the heavenly anthem, closes it with Amen, and ends as it began, worshipping the eternal God.

Happy those who shall adore and praise in heaven, and who shall eternally bless the Lamb, who delivered and consecrated them by his blood. How

worthy art thou, O God, thou art thy Son, that all creatures should proclaim thy greatness, and adore thy majesty! Let every spirit abase and humble itself before thee, and pronounce an Amen of confession and acknowledgment of the holiness and sovereignty of thy being; of adherence to thy will and pleasure, of approval, praise, adoration, and admiration of thy works; of the wisdom of thy dispensations, and of the relation every creature has to thy designs concerning Christ and his church.—(94.)

CHAPTER VI.

The opening of the seals. The first, second, third, and fourth, ver. 1—8. The fifth, 9—11. The sixth, 12—17.

Ver. 1—8. Christ, the Lamb, opens the first seal; he enters upon the great work of opening and accomplishing the purposes of God towards the church and the world. One of the ministers of the church calls upon the apostle, to come near, and observe what then appeared. We have the vision itself.—A rider on a white horse. Most consider that this denotes righteousness and purity, and the mild beneficent victories of Christ by his word and Holy Spirit, in the conversion of sinners to the obedience of faith. He had a bow in his hand; the convictions impressed by the word of God are sharp arrows, they reach at a distance. A crown was given him; all who receive the gospel, must receive Christ as a King, and must be his loyal and obedient subjects. A crown is given him as the earnest and emblem of victory. He went forth conquering and to conquer. As long as the church continues militant, men go on opposing, and Christ goes on conquering; he conquers his enemies in his people; their sins are their enemies, and his enemies. When Christ comes with power into their soul, he begins to conquer these enemies, and he goes on conquering in the work of sanctification; and he conquers his enemies in the world, wicked men, bringing some to his feet, making others his footstool. A morning of opportunity usually goes before a night of calamity; the gospel is preached before the plagues are poured forth. Christ's work is not all done at once; we are ready to think, when the gospel goes forth, it should carry all before it; but it often meets

with opposition, and moves slowly; however, Christ will do his own work effectually, in his own time and way.

By the going forth of this white horse, the progress of the christian religion seems to be intended; its progress in primitive purity, at the time when its heavenly Founder commissioned his apostles to teach all nations, adding, Lo! I am with you always, even to the end of the world. The Divine religion goes out crowned, having the Divine favour resting upon it, armed spiritually against its foes, and destined to be victorious in the end. Two periods seem designated: the first, when the christian religion, preached in purity by its apostles, overcame the powers of darkness and all human opposition. The second, when, after a long warfare, during which this holy religion has been corrupted and debased, it will at length be seen to overcome all opposition and to conquer. These two periods are plainly distinguished in Dan. 2. 34, 35.—(101.)

On opening the second seal, a red horse appears; this signifies desolating judgments; he that sat upon this red horse, had power to take peace from the earth. The sword of war and persecution is a dreadful judgment; it takes away peace from the earth, one of the greatest blessings; and men, who should love one another, and help one another, are set upon killing one another.

Such scenes followed the pure age of primitive christianity, when neglectful of charity, the bond of peace, the christian leaders divided among themselves, appealed to the sword, and involved themselves in guilt. Contests for power among bishops and rulers were not concluded without mutual slaughter; and in the progress of the controversies occasioned by schisms in the church, many thousands perished by the weapons of each other.—(101.)

On opening the third seal, another horse appears, different from the former, a black horse. A colour denoting mourning and woe, darkness and ignorance. He that sat on it had a yoke in his hand. Attempts were made at different times to put a yoke of superstitious observances on the necks of the disciples. As the stream of christianity flowed further from its pure fountain, it became more and more corrupt. Ignorance and superstition increased; at

length the book of God was laid aside for legendary tales and traditions, and a regular system of superstitious oppression was established. During the progress of this black horse, the necessities of life should be attainable, though at an excessive price, and the more costly commodities should not be injured. According to the tenour of prophetic language, these articles signified that food of religious knowledge, by which the souls of men are sustained unto everlasting life; such we are invited to buy, Isa. 55. 1. But when the dark clouds of ignorance and superstition, denoted by the black horse, spread over the face of the christian world, the knowledge and practice of true religion became scarce. Yet during the long continuance of these dark times, the prophetic command has always been fulfilled, there always has been some spiritual food, however scanty the supply; and that invaluable repository of Divine knowledge, of spiritual wine and oil, the word of God, has been accessible to some, and preserved uninjured.—(101.)

When a people loathe their spiritual food, God may justly deprive them of their daily bread. One judgment seldom comes alone, and those who will not humble themselves under one judgment, must expect another, and yet greater; for when God contends, he will prevail. The famine of bread is a terrible judgment; but the famine of the word is more so, though careless sinners are not sensible of it.

Upon opening the fourth seal, there appears another horse, of a pale colour. The name of the rider is given—Death, the king of terrors. The attendants, or followers of this king of terrors—hell, a state of eternal misery to all those who die in their sins; and, in times of general destruction, multitudes go down unprepared into the pit. It is an awful thought, and enough to make the whole world to tremble, that eternal damnation immediately follows upon the death of an impenitent sinner. In the book of the scriptures, God has published threatenings against the wicked, as well as promises to the righteous; and it is our duty to observe and believe the threatenings as well as the promises.

The period of the fourth seal is one of great slaughter and devastation, but not confined to the lives of men; these

extend their destructive influence over whatever may tend to make life happy, making ravages on the spiritual lives of men. Thus the mystery of iniquity was completed, and the usurpation extended both over the lives and consciences of christians. To profess pure religion became a crime. Severe and murderous laws were enacted against those who deviated from the standard of doctrine established by corrupt rulers. Whole nations of christians, under the name of heretics, were subjugated or extirpated. Thus under the auspices and direction of the professed ministers and rulers of the christian church, death and hell were seen to devastate a great part of the christian world, destroying the lives of men, both literally and spiritually, and rooting out the pure doctrines of the gospel. The precise periods of these four seals cannot be exactly ascertained, for the changes were gradual.—(101)

After the opening of these seals of approaching judgments, and the distinct account of them, we have this general observation, that God gave power to them, over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with the sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth. He gave them power, that is, those instruments of his anger, or those judgments; he has all public calamities at his command, and they can only go when God sends them, and no further than he permits. To the three great judgments of war, famine, and pestilence, is here added the beasts of the earth, another of God's sore judgments, mentioned Ezek. 14, 21. Some, by the beasts of the field, understand brutish, cruel, savage men, divested of all humanity, who delight to be the instruments of the destruction of others.

1. The ancient books consisted of skins of parchment, rolled round a piece of wood; the book here described seems to have contained seven such sheets, rolled upon one another, and sealed, but so that each seal would appear separate, and on the first being unloosed, that sheet only could be unrolled; the others remained fastened. (See the sketch in the general note.) Such a book is described, Isa. 29, 11. As each seal was broken, that sheet was unrolled, and seems to have exhibited an hieroglyphical painting of much that is described in the following chapters. *Harmer* says, "St. John evidently supposes paintings or drawings in that volume which he saw in the visions of God. The more ancient books of the east are beautified after this manner." Some expositors have considered there is a reference or mystical con-

nexion between the characteristics of each living creature and of the scene it summonses the apostle to behold.

2. It is impossible to enumerate any considerable part of the very numerous interpretations of the symbolic horses. *Mede*, *Newton*, and many others, consider they point out four periods in the latter history of the roman empire, and select successive events which they consider to correspond with the personifications. *Keith* applies them respectively to the four religious systems; christianity, mohammedanism, popery, infidelity. That contained in the comment is principally from *Woodhouse*, but adopted by *Cuninghame*, *W. Jones*, and others. This idea seems also to have been long since recommended by *Pareus*. See the general note for further particulars of the views of the leading modern commentators on this and the other symbolical representations.

3. The word translated, "a pair of balances," means "a yoke," an emblem of subjugation and slavery.

4. A chenix, or measure of wheat, was just enough for the daily food of a poor family, and the price of it is here stated as a denarius, the whole amount of a day's wages. But in times of plenty a denarius would usually purchase from sixteen to twenty measures of wheat. Expositors have written much upon this head. *Cuninghame* censures the expositions which would apply these seals to certain vicissitudes of no great moment in the secular affairs of the roman empire during the first three centuries. He asks, in terms which might be used in reference to other literal and individual applications of the symbols of this book, "Was it then for the purpose of discovering to the church the state of the roman markets for corn and oil, or the efficiency of its police in apprehending thieves, that all these mighty preparations were made in heaven?" *Vitringa*, in reference to *Mede*, made similar remarks. The four articles which then formed the main support of life are adverted to.—*Bloomfield*. This spiritual famine shall, notwithstanding, be accompanied with great fleshly pleasures and commodities, represented by wine and oil.—*Diodati*. He considers this seal to denote spiritual hunger after the bread of life, which is the true and pure word of God.

Ver. 9—11. The sight the apostle witnessed at the opening of the fifth seal was very affecting. He saw the souls of the martyrs under the altar; at the foot of the altar in heaven, at the foot of Christ. Persecutors can only kill the body, after that there is no more they can do; the souls live. God has provided a good place in the better world for those who are faithful to death, and are not allowed a place any longer on earth. Holy martyrs are very near to Christ in heaven, they have the highest place there. It is not their own death, but the sacrifice of Christ, that gives them entrance into heaven, and a reward there. The cause in which they suffered, was for the word of God; the best

any man can lay down his life for; faith in God's word, and the unshaken confession of that faith.

The cry heard was a loud cry, and contains a humble expostulation. Even the spirits of just men made perfect, though they die in charity, praying, as Christ did, that God would forgive their enemies, yet desire that for the honour of God, and Christ, and the gospel, and for the conviction of others, God will take just vengeance upon the sin of persecution, even while he pardons and saves the persecutors. They commit their cause to Him to whom vengeance belongeth. Yet there will be joy in heaven at the destruction of the implacable enemies of Christ, as well as at the conversion of other sinners, ch. 18. 20. The Lord himself is the Comforter of his afflicted servants, precious is their blood in his sight. Their enemies can only kill the body, then the Lord delivers them out of all their troubles.

White robes were given to them—the robes of victory and honour; their present happiness was an abundant recompence of past sufferings. They should be satisfied, for it would not be long before the number of their fellow-sufferers should be fulfilled; this is a language rather suited to the imperfect state of the saints in this world, than to the perfection of their state in heaven; there is no impatience, no uneasiness, no need of admonition; but in this world there is great need of patience. As the measure of the sin of persecutors is filling up, so is the number of the persecuted martyred servants of Christ. When this number is fulfilled, God will recompense tribulation to those who trouble them, and to those that are troubled full and uninterrupted rest.

There seems no reason why this seal should be restricted to any particular body of martyrs of any particular period. All are to be avenged; and it may, perhaps, be most fitly understood to comprehend all the martyrs to the christian cause, from the apostolical age to the happy time when such sufferings shall finally cease.—(101.)

Ver. 12—17. The sixth seal is opened. There was a great earthquake; the very foundations of churches and states would be terribly shaken. The sun became black as sackcloth of hair; figura-

tively, by the fall of chief rulers and governors. The moon should become as blood. The stars of heaven should fall to the earth. The stars may signify the men of note and influence; there should be a general desolation. The heaven should depart as a scroll when it is rolled together. Every mountain and island shall be moved out of their places. Such bold metaphorical descriptions of great revolutions abound in the prophecies of scripture; for these events are emblems and anticipations of the end of the world and the day of judgment. Dread and terror would seize upon all sorts of men in that awful day, ver. 15. Neither authority, grandeur, riches, valour, nor strength, would support men at that time. Even the slaves, who had nothing to lose, would be in amazement at that day. Their terror and astonishment should prevail, so as to make them, like distracted desperate men, call to the mountains to fall upon them, and to the hills to cover them. They would be glad to be no more seen; yea, to have no longer any being. The cause of their terror was, the angry countenance of Him that sits on the throne, and the wrath of the Lamb. That which is matter of displeasure to Christ, is so to God; they are entirely one. Though God be invisible, he can make the inhabitants of this world sensible of his awful frowns. And though Christ be a Lamb, he can be angry even to wrath, and the wrath of the Lamb is exceeding dreadful; for if the Redeemer, who appeases the wrath of God, himself be our wrathful enemy, where shall we have a friend to plead for us? They perish without remedy, who perish by the wrath of the Redeemer. As men have their day of opportunity, and their seasons of grace, so God has his day of righteous wrath; and when that day comes, the most stout-hearted sinners will not be able to stand before him. Let all who look for such things be diligent; that they may be found of Him in peace, without spot, and blameless.

Since the preceding seal related specially to the church, describing it as recently emerged from the bloody persecutions of pagan Rome, it seems natural that the overthrow of the paganism of the roman empire, and the establishment of christianity in its stead, should be here intended. The various idolaters

of the roman world are described as hiding themselves in their consecrated grottoes, and as vainly seeking to avert the ruin which hangs over their late triumphant persecution.—(22.)

The Holy Spirit had denounced in terms very similar, by the Old Testament prophets, the Divine judgments about to fall upon corrupt Judea and the surrounding wicked nations; and our Lord himself delivered a remarkable prophecy in the same figurative language. The primary object has been supposed by some to be the destruction of Jerusalem and the Jewish polity; for in this event we find a type, a lively image, and a certain pledge and fore-runner of the more signal and extended vengeance which will overtake the enemies of God, in the latest period of the world.—(101.)

In such a day, when the signs of the times tell him who believes in God's word, that the King of kings and Lord of lords is approaching, Christians are eminently called to a decided course, to a bold confession of Christ and his truth before their fellow-men. Whatever present shame or reproach they may have to endure, how infinitely better is the transient contempt of man, than that shame and contempt, which is everlasting, and before the universe of God!—(5.)

17. *V'ringa* considers that the sixth seal foretells that great commotions would suddenly arise, both in the empire of papal Rome, and in the other kingdoms, and states of Europe—that in common with the seventh vial, it foretells the destruction of the antichristian empire. This was the opinion of several early writers. *Daubuz* applies it to the downfall of paganism.

CHAPTER VII.

A pause between two great periods, ver. 1-3. The peace, happiness, and safety of the saints, as signified by an angel's sealing 144,000, 4-8. A chorus of the whole church, with which the holy angels join in a song of praise on this joyful occasion, 9-12. One of the elders informs the apostle of the blessedness and glory of those that suffered martyrdom for Christ, 13-17.

Ver. 1-8. The execution of the Divine judgment so fearfully expected by the inhabitants of the earth, is represented as committed to four angels, the ministers of Divine vengeance, each of whom takes his appointed station, withholding the fury of the tempest, till he

receive an additional command. In the figurative language of scripture, the action of the four winds together, implies a dreadful and general destruction. The east being the quarter of the heavens from whence the luminaries arise, was, by the ancients, esteemed the chief cardinal point. The fifth angel appears in the most honourable station, and proclaims his orders. By these the destructive violence decreed, is suspended and restrained, till the servants of God are marked with the seal of Him who alone has life in himself, and through whom only, others can live. Seals anciently were used to mark for each person his own possessions. The seal of God is the Divine mark by which he knoweth them that are his.—(101.)

This mark is the witness of the Holy Ghost imprinted in the hearts of believers. And the Lord would not suffer his people to be afflicted before they were marked, that they might be prepared against all encounters.—(16.)

While some of the angels were employed to restrain Satan and his agents, another angel was to mark the faithful servants of God. The seal of God was set upon their foreheads; a seal known to him, and as plain as if it appeared in their foreheads; by this mark they were set apart for mercy and safety in the worst of times. God has particular care for his own servants in times of temptation and corruption, and secures them from the common infection; he first establishes them, and then he tries them; he has the timing of their trials in his own hand. Nor is it unnecessary to observe of those who are thus sealed by the Spirit, that the seal must be on the forehead, plainly to be seen alike by friends and foes, but not by the believer himself, except as he looks stedfastly in the glass of God's word.

The number of those who were sealed, were twelve thousand out of every tribe of Israel; in this list the tribe of Dan is omitted, perhaps because they were greatly addicted to idolatry. But it may be understood of the remnant of people which God had reserved, according to the election of grace, only a definite number is given for an indefinite. The Lord knows who are his, and he will keep them safe in times of dangerous temptation. Though the church of God is but a little flock, in compari-

son with the wicked world, yet it is no contemptible society, but really large, and to be still more enlarged.

Here the universal church secured by the seal of God, is figured under the type of Israel. For the church, which from the time of the rejection of the jews, was collected out of the nations, succeeded in the place of Israel, and was to be accounted in that state by God, until his ancient people, having at length obtained mercy, the fulness of the gentiles should come in. This doctrine of substitution is what the apostle Paul teaches, Rom. 2, when he entreats that the fall of the jews should bring salvation to the gentiles, and their rejection be the reconciliation of the world.—(93.)

3 *Cunningham* says, "The sealing which here takes place, is doubtless similar to that mentioned, Eph. 1. 13; for in every age of the church the true members of Christ have been so sealed, yet here there seems to be something more directly and solemnly of a judicial character. It is the word of God, whether preached, or diffused in a written form, which is the great instrument used by the Spirit in sealing the servants of God."

4. The order in which the names of the tribes are here placed has given rise to much discussion among expositors. If the reader wishes to see the extent to which ingenuity can be exercised in drawing forth a mystical, yet a good sense, he may refer to *Mede*.

Levi may be inserted instead of Dan, to put a brand on the latter as noted for idolatry, and to teach us that the priesthood of Levi has now given way to a better priesthood, and that he and his sons must be partakers of the common salvation, and be sprinkled with the same precious blood as others.—*Hutchison*.

Ver. 9-12. The first fruits of Christ having led the way, the gentiles of later conversion follow, and are incorporated with them, and presented before the throne in white robes, pure from sin, bearing palms, the signals of joy, Lev. 23. 40, and they ascribe their salvation to God and the Redeemer, celebrating it triumphantly.—(101)

These praising saints stood before the Creator and Mediator. In acts of religious worship we come nigh to God, and are to consider ourselves as in his special presence; and we must come to God by Christ, the throne of God would be inaccessible to sinners, were it not for a Mediator. They were clothed with white robes, and had palms in their hands; they were invested with the robes of justification, holiness, and victory, and had palms in their hands, as conquerors used to appear in their triumphs;

such a glorious appearance will the faithful servants of God make at last, when they have fought the good fight of faith, and finished their course. They cried with a loud voice, giving to God and the Lamb the praise of the great salvation; those who enjoy it must and will bless both the Father and the Son; they will do it publicly, and with becoming fervour.

The angels stand before the throne of God, attending on him, and about the saints, ready to serve them. Their posture expresses the greatest reverence. Behold the most excellent of creatures, who never sinned, who are before God continually, not only covering their faces, but falling down on their faces before the Lord! What humility then, and what profound reverence, become us vile, frail creatures, when we come into the presence of God! They consented to the praises of the saints, said their Amen thereto. There is in heaven a perfect harmony between the angels and saints. And then they added, Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever, Amen. Here they acknowledge the glorious attributes of God—his wisdom, his power, and his might. They declare that for these, his Divine perfections, he ought to be blessed, and praised, and glorified, to all eternity; and they confirm it by their Amen. We see what is the work of heaven, and we ought to begin it now, to have our hearts much in it, and to long for that world where our praises, as well as happiness, will be perfected. This being connected with their consent to the praises rendered to God and the Lamb, clearly intimated that they honoured the Son, as they honoured the eternal Father.

10. It should be translated, "the salvation." Thus it expresses that peculiar deliverance and state of safety, which this palm-bearing multitude of gentile converts, together with the chosen israelites, now experienced from the great tribulation.—*Woodhouse*. Some suppose the 144,000 represent jewish converts; the great multitude, gentile believers.—See the general note. *Guyse* considers the first to be converts, both jews and gentiles; the second, the martyrs. *Vitringa* considers that the full accomplishment is yet to come, as no period can be assigned when the destruction of Christ's enemies, and the exaltation of his servants in perfect purity and happiness, have borne a satisfactory resemblance to what is here depicted.

Ver. 13-17. A question was asked

by one of the elders, not for his own information, but for John's instruction. The lowest saint in heaven knows more than the greatest apostle in the world. What are these that are arrayed in white robes? Faithful christians deserve our notice and respect; we should mark the upright. The apostle acknowledges his own ignorance. Those who would gain knowledge, must not be ashamed to desire instruction from any able to give it. These glorified saints had been persecuted by men, tempted by Satan, sometimes troubled in their own spirits; they had suffered the spoiling of their goods, the imprisonment of their persons, the loss of life itself. The way to heaven lies through many tribulations; but tribulation, how great soever, shall not separate us from the love of God. Tribulation makes heaven more welcome and more glorious. They were prepared for the great honour and happiness they now enjoyed; not by their repentance, or forms, or services, or acts of charity; not by their labours and sufferings for the gospel; but they had washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. It is not the blood of the martyrs themselves, but the blood of the Lamb that can wash away sin, and make the soul pure and clean in the sight of God; other blood stains, this is the only blood that makes the robes of the saints white and clean. They are advanced to blessedness; they are happy in their station, for they are before the throne of God night and day, and he dwells among them; they are in that presence where there is fulness of joy. Thus, by His love, and the displays of his glory, all their thirstings after him and happiness were fully satisfied, nor were they troubled with one desire of any other or of greater happiness than they securely enjoyed. They are happy in their employment, for they serve God continually, and that without weakness or weariness; heaven is a state of service, though not of suffering; it is a state of rest, but not of sloth; it is a praising, delightful rest. They are happy in their freedom from all inconveniences of this present life; also freed from all persecution, sickness, and pain; they are happy in the love and conduct of the Lord Jesus, who leads them to the fountains of living waters; he shall put them into

the possession of every thing pleasant and refreshing to their souls. They are happy in being delivered from all sorrow or occasion of it. They have had sorrows, and shed many tears on account of sin and affliction; but God himself, with his own gentle and gracious hand, will wipe those tears away, and they shall return no more for ever. And they would not have been without those tears, when God comes to wipe them away. He deals with them as a tender father. This should moderate the christian's sorrow in his present state, and support him under all its troubles, Psa. 126. 5, 6. As all the redeemed owe their happiness wholly to the sovereign mercy of the Father, through the atonement of the Son, and by the sealing and new creation of the Holy Spirit; so the work and worship of God their Saviour is their element, his presence and favour complete their happiness, nor can they conceive of any other joy. Let us then inquire whether we have, in our judgment, experience, and affections, meetness for this inheritance of the saints in light.

Let us seek grace to contemplate Christ without ceasing, as in the midst of the throne. He has all Divine attributes, all Divine blessings, all suited grace, all suited mercy. To him may all his people come; in him they find all suited fulness; from him they receive every needed grace; and to him offer all praise and glory. Lord! hasten the hour when thy whole church shall be round thy throne, and thou shalt have wiped all tears from all eyes!—(37.)

14. Such passages as this and ch. 1. 5, and 5. 9, are so strong for the atonement of Christ, that they cannot be evaded.—*Gilpin*.

CHAPTER VIII.

The seventh seal is opened, and silence follows in heaven for a little space: Seven angels appear with seven trumpets, ready to proclaim the purposes of God, 1, 2. Another angel casts fire on the earth, which produces terrible storms of vengeance, 3—5. Hereupon the seven angels prepare to sound their trumpets, 6. And four sound them, 7—12. And another angel denounces greater woes to come under the three following trumpets, 13.

Ver. 1—6. The seventh seal is opened. There was profound silence in heaven for a space; all was quiet in the church, for whenever the church on earth cries

through oppression, that cry comes up to heaven. The intervals of peace enjoyed by the church hitherto have been but of short continuance. Or it is a silence of expectation; the church of God, both in heaven and earth, stood silent to see what God was about to do, Zech. 2. 13. Trumpets were delivered to the angels, who were to sound them. The angels are employed as wise and willing instruments of Divine Providence. Another angel must first offer incense. It is very probable that this other angel is the Lord Jesus, the High Priest of the church, here described in his priestly office, having a golden censer, and much incense, a fulness of merit in his own glorious person, and this incense he was to offer up, with the prayers of all the saints, upon the golden altar of his Divine nature. All the saints are a praying people; a Spirit of grace is always a Spirit of adoption and supplication, teaching us to cry, Abba, Father, Psa. 32. 6. Times of danger should be praying times, and so should times of great expectation; both our fears and our hopes should put us upon prayer, and where the interest of the church of God is deeply concerned, the hearts of the people of God should be greatly enlarged in prayer. The prayers of the saints need the intercession of Christ to make them acceptable and effectual, and there is provision made by Christ for that purpose; he has his incense, his censer, and his altar; he is himself all these to his people. The prayers of the saints come up before God in a cloud of incense; no prayer, thus recommended, was ever denied audience and acceptance. These prayers, thus accepted in heaven, produced great changes upon earth. The same angel that in his censer offered up the prayers of the saints, in the same censer took of the fire of the altar, and cast it into the earth, and this caused strange commotions. The fire must have first come from the altar of burnt-offering. It denoted that the approaching calamities would be the effect of the displeasure of God with men, for their opposition to the gospel of his Son, and their injurious and cruel treatment of his people. These were the answers God gave to the prayers of the saints, and were tokens of his anger against the world, and that he would do great things to avenge himself,

and his people of their enemies; and now all things being thus prepared, the angels proceed to discharge their duty.

The christian worship and religion, pure and heavenly in its origin and nature, when sent down to earth and conflicting with the passions and worldly projects of sinful men, produces signal commotions, expressed in prophetic language, as our Lord himself declared that in sending forth his holy religion to the earth, he had cast fire thereon, Luke 12. 49.—(101.)

1. *Keth*, with some others, considers that the seventh seal is manifestly of a different character from the six that preceded. He thinks that the spiritual state of the world was described previous to the political; and that as the outline of the former is contained in the first six seals, the seventh seal, under the seven trumpets, begins to open up the latter. It does not follow that what is recorded under each successive seal, can only refer to events that follow in order of time.

5. Three earthquakes are mentioned in the Apocalypse:—1. ch. 8. 5. *Cuninghame* refers this to the downfall of paganism in the time of Constantine. 2. Precedes the passing away of the second woe, and is identified with the period of the reformation. 3. That of the day of wrath, ch. 6. 12—17; 11. 18, 19; 16. 18. The first shock of this he considers to be the french revolution in 1792; but that its most tremendous concussions are yet future.

Ver. 7—13. The first angel sounded the first trumpet, and there followed hail and fire mingled with blood. A terrible storm; but whether it is to be understood of a storm of heresies, a mixture of monstrous errors falling on the church, or a tempest of destruction, expositors are not agreed. It fell on the third part of the trees, and on the third part of the grass, and blasted and burnt it up. The most severe calamities are bounded and limited by the great God.

The second angel sounded, and the alarm was followed with terrible events, ver. 8; a great mountain, burning with fire, was cast into the sea; and the third part of the sea became blood. By this mountain some understand leaders of the persecutions; others, Rome sucked by the goths and vandals, with great slaughter and cruelty. In these calamities, a third part of the people, called here the sea, or collection of waters, were destroyed; there was still a limitation to the third part, for in the midst of judgment God remembers mercy.

The third angel sounded, and there fell a great star from heaven. Some take this to be an eminent governor,

others take it to be some eminent persons who corrupted the churches of Christ. This star fell upon a third part of the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters, ver. 10. It turned those springs and streams into wormwood, made them very bitter, so that men were poisoned by them. Laws, which are springs of civil liberty, and property, and safety, are poisoned by arbitrary power. The doctrines of the gospel, the springs of spiritual life, refreshment, and vigour, to the souls of men, are corrupted and embittered by the mixture of dangerous errors, so that the souls of men find their ruin where they sought their refreshment.

The fourth angel sounded, and the alarm was followed with further calamities. The nature of this calamity was darkness; it fell upon the great luminaries of the heaven, that give light to the world—the sun, and the moon, and the stars; the guides and governors are placed in higher orbs than the people, and are to dispense light and benign influences to them. It was confined to a third part of these luminaries; there was some light, but it was only a third part of what there was before. Without determining what is matter of controversy in these points, we make these plain and practical remarks:—Where the gospel comes to a people, and has not its proper effects upon their hearts and lives, it is usually followed with dreadful judgments. God gives warning to men before he sends his judgments; he sounds an alarm by the written word, by ministers, by men's own consciences, and by the signs of the times; so that if a people are surprised, it is their own fault. The anger of God against a people embitters all comforts, and makes even life itself burdensome. God, in this world, sets bounds to the most terrible judgments. Corruption of doctrine and worship in the church are great judgments, and also are the usual causes and tokens of other judgments coming on a people.

Before the other three trumpets are sounded, here is solemn warning how terrible the calamities would be that should follow, and how miserable the times and places would be, on which they fell, ver. 13. The messenger was an angel flying in the midst of heaven, as in haste, and coming on an

awful errand. The message denounced further and greater woe and misery than the world had hitherto endured. Three woes are announced, showing how much the calamities coming would exceed those that had been already, or to hint how each of the three succeeding trumpets would introduce its particular and distinct calamity. If lesser judgments do not take effect, but the church and the world grow worse under them, they must expect greater; and when God comes to punish the world, the inhabitants thereof shall tremble before him. Let sinners then take warning to flee from the wrath to come; let believers learn to value and to be thankful for their privileges; let them patiently continue in well doing, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus unto eternal life,

13. *Keith* says, Commentators, with considerable variance in the details, are mostly of one mind, that the first four trumpets denote the successive events which caused the downfall of Rome, and the fifth and sixth characterize the saracen and turkish power. Authority here, in some measure, supersedes the necessity of lengthened discussion, and few could elucidate the texts more clearly, or expound them more fully, than has been done by the sceptical philosopher, *Gibbon*! *Keith* follows other writers in extracting largely from the History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, and notices the manner in which all the industry and genius of *Gibbon* were unconsciously devoted to the task of showing the form in which a portion of the revelation of Jesus Christ was developed. He who strove to show that the gospel was propagated by secondary causes, has himself proved by the toil of twenty years, and by numbers of accumulated facts, that such causes hold but a subordinate rank even in the revolutions of earthly kingdoms! To the purposes of the Most High, the labours of sceptics, as well as the ravages of heathens, may all be made alike subservient. And they who, following *Gibbon*, would consign the work that was of God to the sole agency of secondary causes, and think that the gospel of his Son was the device of human wisdom, and its propagation through the world the mere effect of human means, may look to the result of all this sceptic's labours, which fit him for ever as a commentator on the Apocalypse!

CHAPTER IX.

The fifth trumpet is followed with a representation of another star as falling from heaven and opening the bottomless pit, out of which come swarms of locusts, ver. 1-12. The sixth trumpet is followed with the loosing of four angels bound in the great river Euphrates, 13-21.

Ver. 1-12. Upon sounding the fifth trumpet, a star fell from heaven to the earth. Some think this star represents

a minister of the church. To this fallen star was given the key of the bottomless pit. Having now ceased to be a minister of Christ, he becomes the minister of the devil; and lets loose the powers of hell against the churches of Christ. Upon the opening of the bottomless pit, there arose a great smoke. The devils are the powers of darkness. Hell is the place of darkness. The devil carries on his designs by blinding the eyes of men, by extinguishing light and knowledge, and promoting ignorance and error. He first deceives men, and then destroys them; wretched souls follow him in the dark. Out of this smoke there came a swarm of locusts, emblematical of the devil's emissaries, to promote superstition, idolatry, error, and cruelty; and these had, by the just permission of God, power to hurt all those who had not the mark of God in their foreheads. The hurt they were to do them, was not a bodily, but a spiritual hurt. The trees and the grass, (the true believers whether young or more advanced,) should be untouched. But a secret poison and infection in the soul should rob many others of their purity, and afterward of their peace. Heresy is a poison to the soul, working slowly and secretly, but will be bitterness in the end. The locusts had no power to hurt those who had the seal of God. God's effectual, distinguishing grace will preserve his people from total and final apostasy. The power given to these emissaries of Satan is limited to a certain season, and but a short season; gospel seasons have their limits, and times of seduction are limited too. Though it would be short, it would be very sharp; those made to feel the malignity of this poison would be weary of their lives, ver. 6. A wounded spirit who can bear? These locusts were like horses prepared to battle. They pretended to great authority, and seemed to be assured of victory; they had crowns like gold on their heads; it was not a true, but a counterfeit authority. They had also the show of wisdom and sagacity, the faces of men, though the spirit of devils. They had the allurements of seeming beauty, to ensnare and defile the minds of men. Though they appeared with the tenderness of women, they had the teeth of lions—were really cruel. They had the defence of earthly power, breast-plates of iron. They made a mighty

noise in the world, as they flew from one country to another. Though at first they soothed and flattered men with a fair appearance, there was a sting in their tails. The cup of their abominations contained that, which, though luscious at first, would at length bite like a serpent, and sting like an adder. The commander of this hellish squadron is the angel of the bottomless pit; an angel still, but a fallen angel. In the infernal regions he has the powers of darkness under his rule and command. His true name is Abaddon, Apollyon—a destroyer, that is his design and employment, in which he is very successful, and takes a horrid hellish pleasure. About this destroying work he sends forth his emissaries and armies to destroy the souls of men.

Such invaders, led on by an evil angel from the depths of hell, must have for their object the christian church, the heritage of Christ. If they assail by force of arms, how can the scaled escape? Under such circumstances, the faithful undergo their share of common calamity, but from a postilential heresy they might and would be secure. Their principles and practice, and the seal of God, would save them. We collect from scripture that such heresies were pre-ordained to try and prove the christians, 1 Cor. 11. 19. And we find early writers plainly referring this to the first great host of corruptors who overspread the christian church.—(101.)

11. *Phodhouse* considers that the prophetic representation of the locusts, was probably fulfilled by the first general and extensive apostasy, that of the gnostics. He enters into the particulars, showing their fulfilment in some striking instances. (See the general note on the gnostics.) *Horsley* considers that the apocalyptic locusts represent heretics, not soldiers. The generality of the commentators, however, apply the fifth trumpet to the saracens, restricting the sixth to the turks. *Woodhouse* considers that the sixth includes the ravages of mohammedanism generally. A few of the commentators refer these trumpets to the monastic orders, but almost all the writers of the middle ages, and many in the reformed churches, understood the swarms of locusts as denoting swarms of heretics. *Mede* seems to have been the first expositor of note who interpreted the fifth trumpet of Mohammed. *Hutchison* would still apply it to the pope.

Ver. 13-21. The sixth angel sounded, and a voice was heard from the horns of the golden altar. The power of the enemies of the church is restrained till

God gives the word to have them loosed. The instruments that God uses to punish a people may sometimes be at a great distance. These four messengers of Divine judgment were bound in the river Euphrates, a great way from the European nations. Here the Turkish power had its rise, which seems the subject of this vision. The time of their operations and executions is limited; and the execution is restricted to a third part of the inhabitants of the earth. God will make the wrath of man praise him, and the remainder of wrath he will restrain. The army to execute this great commission should be vast; and the colours mentioned represent red, blue, and yellow, the colours for which the Turks have been remarkable. Their equipage and appearance were formidable; their artillery seems to be described by fire, smoke, and brimstone. And they not only slew in war, but left a poisonous and ruinous religion behind them wherever they went. And observe the impenitence of the antichristian generation under these dreadful judgments, those who were not destroyed or subjugated by the Turks, repented not. They still persisted in the sins for which God so severely punished them. They would not cast away their images. They murdered the saints and servants of Christ. They practised sorceries; they allow both spiritual and carnal impurity. By unjust means they heap together wealth, injuring and impoverishing families, cities, princes, and nations. They are obstinate, hardened, and impenitent, for they must be destroyed. From this sixth trumpet learn that God can make one enemy of the church a scourge and a plague to another. He who is the Lord of hosts has vast armies at his command. The most formidable powers have limits they cannot go beyond. When God's judgments are in the earth, he expects the inhabitants should repent of sin, and learn righteousness. And impenitence under Divine judgments is an iniquity that will ruin sinners; where God judges, he will overcome.

The persevering idolatry in the remains of the eastern church and elsewhere, and the iniquity of professed Christians, renders the prophecy more circumstantial, and its fulfilment more wonderful. And the attentive reader of scripture and history may find his faith

and hope increased by events which in other respects fill his heart with anguish and his eyes with tears, while he sees men increasing the misery of their fellow-creatures, and while he sees that men who escape these plagues repent not of their evil works, but go on with idolatries, wickedness, and cruelty, till wrath comes upon them to the uttermost.

Send forth, O Lord, the gentle influences of thy Spirit, and melt those hearts which will not be broken by the weightiest strokes of thy vengeance, and deliver us from a temper so much resembling that of hell, and so evidently leading down to those dreadful abodes; the temper of those who are hardened by correction, and who, in the time of their affliction and misery, increase and multiply their transgressions against thee.—(80.)

16. Signifying a vast and almost incredible multitude.—*Guyse.*

17. *Faber* agrees with those who consider that flashes of artillery are here described. Cannon of an enormous size were used by *Muhammed II.* in the siege of Constantinople, and it was chiefly by those instruments that he succeeded.

CHAPTER X.

The Angel of the covenant is represented as presenting a little open book, which is followed with seven thunders, 1-4. At the expiration of the following prophecies, time should be no more, 5-7. A voice directs the apostle to eat the book, 8-10. And tells him he must further prophecy, 11.

Ver. 1-7. The apostle saw another representation. The person communicating this discovery probably was our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, or an emblematical display of his glory. He was clothed with a cloud; he veils his glory, which is too great for mortality to behold; and he throws a veil upon his dispensations. A rainbow was upon his head; our Lord is always mindful of his covenant; and when his conduct is most mysterious, yet it is perfectly just and faithful. His face was as the sun, bright and full of lustre and majesty. His feet were as pillars of fire; all his ways, both of grace and providence, are pure and steady. He set his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot upon the earth; this shows his absolute power and dominion over the world. And he held in his hand a little book opened. His awful voice was echoed by seven thunders,

solemn and terrible ways of discovering the mind of God. A prohibition was given to the apostle, that he should not publish, but conceal, what he heard from the seven thunders. The apostle was for preserving and publishing every thing he saw and heard in these visions, but the time for this was not yet come.

As we know not the subjects of the seven thunders, so neither can we know the reasons for suppressing them.—(50.) They are suppressed by Divine wisdom; and all we can learn is—that there are great events in history, perhaps relating to the christian church, which are not made subjects of open prophecy.—(101.)

A solemn oath was taken by this mighty angel: He lifted up his hand to heaven, and swore by him that liveth for ever; by himself, as God often has done; or by God as God, to whom Christ, as Lord, Redeemer, and Ruler of the world appeals—That there shall be time no longer; no longer delay in fulfilling the predictions of this book, than till the last angel should sound; then every thing should be put into execution. And when this mystery of God is finished, time itself shall be no more, as being the measure of things that are in a mutable changing state; but all things shall be for ever fixed, and so time itself swallowed up in eternity. The final salvation of the righteous, and the final prevalence of true religion on earth, are engaged for by the unfailing word of the Lord. Though the time may not be yet, it cannot be far distant. Very soon, as to us; time shall be no more; but if we are believers, a happy eternity will follow; and we shall from heaven behold and rejoice in the triumphs of Christ, and his cause on earth.

2. There is much difference of opinion as to the contents of this little book. Most commentators suppose that it contained a part of the prophecies of the Apocalypsc. Some suppose it one of the seven parts of the sealed book, others that it contained all the rest of the apocalyptic visions. *Faber* thinks the contents were ch. 11 to 14. *Scott* considers it included only ch. 11. 1—14. Others have thought that the little book did not contain any of the apocalyptic prophecies, but was itself an emblem.

6. That there should be no more delay.—*Scholefield*. The word signifies delay as well as times.—*Doddridge*.

Ver. 8—11. A strict charge was given to the apostle to take the little book out of the hands of the mighty angel; and eat it. This charge was given by

the angel himself, declaring to the apostle, that before he should publish what he had discovered, he must thoroughly digest the predictions, and be himself suitably affected with them. At first, while in his mouth, it was sweet. Persons feel pleasure in looking into future events, and all good men like to receive a word from God, of what import soever it be. But when this book of prophecy was more thoroughly digested by the apostle, the contents would be bitter; there were things so awful and terrible, such grievous persecutions of the people of God, and such desolations in the earth, that the foresight and foreknowledge of them would be painful to his mind. Thus as *Ezekiel*, ch. 3. 3. The apostle took the little book out of the angel's hand, and ate it up, and he found all to be as was told him. It becomes the servants of God to digest in their own souls the messages they bring to others in his name, and to be suitably affected therewith themselves. It becomes them to deliver every message with which they are charged, whether pleasing or unpleasing to men. The apostle is made to know that this book of prophecy was not given merely to gratify his own curiosity, or to affect him with pleasure or pain, but to convey those declarations of the mind and will of God, which are of great importance to all the world, and to the highest and greatest men in the world, and such should be read and recorded in many languages. This indeed is the case; we have the prophecy, and are humbly to inquire its meaning, and firmly to believe that every thing shall have its accomplishment in the proper time; its sense and truth will appear, and the infinite knowledge, power, and faithfulness of the great God will be adored.

Let us seek instructions from Christ, and obey his orders; daily meditating on his word, that it may become nourishment to our souls; and then declaring it according to our several stations. The sweetness of such contemplations often will be mingled with bitterness; while we compare the scriptures with the state of the world and the church, or even with that of our own hearts. Yet, if we have scriptural ground to conclude that we are interested in the salvation of Christ, and if we are employed in any measure for the good of others, we

should not so much regard our present feelings, as the glory of God in our eternal happiness, and that of those with whom we are connected, and in the salvation of sinners in all regions.

10. *Forbes* considers the little book is the scriptures, and its being open denotes the bold and powerful preaching of the word. It is open for that clear understanding of holy scripture which now Christ should bring, whereas in anti-christ's darkness the same was buried in ignorance, it being held a capital crime for common laymen to read the scripture in the vulgar tongue. *Quænesi* refers ver. 9 to the understanding the truths of the Divine word. *Kesth* considers this vision as pointing to the reformation. The open book he refers to the Bible. And that the translation or opening of it, especially of the New Testament, unfolding the precepts of Jesus, and the doctrines of the gospel, gave a character to the time, which in respect to the widely extended diffusion of the scriptures by the then recent art of printing, the days of the apostle scarcely equalled. The gospel, as a book, may be said to have been for the first time open to the world. The seven thunders he considers to be seven wars, which succeeded the reformation, and which fill up the chasm after it, till the pouring out the vials of the wrath of God. But it is at least useless to speculate upon a point which the Divine word expressly states is not to be investigated. When the apostle tasted the good word of God, and knew the meaning of the descent of the angel, it was sweet to his heart; yet when he knew the ungodly rancour, murderous wars, and fierce animosity which would follow, grief succeeded to his joy—his heart was bitter, was afflicted.

10. *Lowman* paraphrases this verse—"I accordingly meditated deeply on the contents of the little book, and found it to contain in part things of great consolation, and in part things that gave me great concern and sorrow."

11. *Mede* infers that the apostle is about to go again over the same period he had before discoursed of, giving an account of the state of the church, as he had done of the empire; but the new descriptions and new events to which they refer, which follow, may be sufficient to explain the expression.—*Doddridge*.

CHAPTER XI.

The state of the church is represented under the figure of a temple measured, ver. 1, 2. Two witnesses prophesy in sackcloth, 3—6. They are slain, after which they arise and ascend to heaven, 7—13. Under the seventh trumpet, all antichristian powers would be destroyed, and there would be a glorious state of Christ's kingdom upon earth, 14—19.

Ver. 1, 2. This prophetic passage about measuring the temple seems to refer to Ezekiel's vision. The design of this measure seems to be its preservation in times of public danger and calamity; or for its trial, that it may be seen how far it agrees with the stand-

ard; or for its reformation, that what is deficient or changed may be regulated. The temple, the gospel church in general, was to be measured; also the altar. The place of the most solemn acts of worship may be put for religious worship in general; and this may be to ascertain the church takes Christ for their altar, and lays all their offerings there; and whether it worships God in the Spirit and in truth. The worshippers must be measured; whether they make God's glory their end, and his word their rule, in all their acts of worship; whether they come to God with suitable affections, and whether their conversation be as becomes the gospel. This seems to denote, that in the predicted period there will be a small number, whose doctrine, worship, and behaviour, will bear measuring by the word of God; and that those only would be acceptable heart worshippers.

The court without the temple was not measured. Most professed christians would be formal, superstitious, and idolatrous worshippers—christians only in name. As the court was designed for the gentiles, who sought pagan ceremonies and customs, and annexed them to the gospel churches, so Christ abandoned it to them, to be used as they pleased; and both that and the city were trodden under foot for a certain time, forty and two months: which some suppose to be the whole time of the reign of antichrist. Those who worship in the outer court, worship in a false manner, or with hypocritical hearts; these are rejected of God, and will be found among his enemies. God will have a temple and an altar in the world, till the end of time. He has strict regard to this temple, and observes how every thing is managed in it. Those who worship only in the outer court, will be rejected; and only those who worship within, accepted. The holy city, the visible church, is trodden under foot; is filled with idolaters, infidels, and hypocrites. But the desolations of the church are for a limited time, and she shall be delivered out of all her troubles.

Ver. 3—13. In the time of treading down, God reserved his faithful witnesses to attest the truth of his word and worship, and the excellence of his

ways. The number of these witnesses is but small, yet sufficient. Many will own and acknowledge Christ in times of prosperity, who desert and deny him in times of persecution. All real christians, who boldly profess their religion, may be considered as uniting in this testimony. The time of their prophesying, or bearing testimony for Christ, is 1260 days; and if the beginning of that interval could be ascertained, this number of prophetic days, taking a day for a year, would give us a prospect when the end shall be. They prophesy in sackcloth. It expresses their afflicted persecuted state, and their deep concern and sorrow of heart, on account of the abominations against which they protested. They were supported during their great and hard work; God gave them power to prophesy. He made them to be like Joshua and Zerubbabel, the two olive-trees and the candlestick, Zech. 4. God made them olive-trees, and their lamps of profession were kept burning by the oil of inward gracious principles, which they received from God. They had oil, not only in their lamps, but in their vessels; habits of spiritual life, light, and zeal. By praying and preaching, and courage in suffering, they wound the hearts and consciences of many persecutors, who go away self-condemned, and are terrors to themselves. God has ordained arrows for the persecutors, and often plagues them while persecuting his people.

These witnesses are invulnerable, till their work is done. When they were about to finish their testimony, when they had prophesied in sackcloth the greatest part of 1260 years, they should feel the last effect of antichristian malice. Antichrist, the great instrument of the devil, should war against them, not only with the arms of subtle and sophistical learning, but with open force and violence; and God would permit his enemies to prevail against his witnesses for a time. Their bodies were cast out in the open street of Babylon. This city is spiritually called Sodom, for monstrous wickedness; and Egypt for idolatry and tyranny; and here Christ suffers in his mystical body, the church. Their dead bodies were insulted by the inhabitants of the earth, and their death was a matter of mirth and joy to the antichristian world, ver. 10. Determined

rebels against the light rejoice, as on some happy event, when they can silence, drive to a distance, or destroy the faithful servants of Christ, whose doctrine and conduct torment them.

The prophets who reprov'd the corruption of their times were accounted disturbers of the public peace, and often were an uneasiness to corrupt persons. Thus Ahab. And the prophets who now preach against the errors of the world are treated as public enemies, seditious persons, and as the cause of those public calamities they foretell, as the punishment of a perverse generation.—(89.)

It does not appear that the term is yet expired, and the witnesses prophesying in sackcloth before they are slain and rise again, seems to extend through the whole of the 1260 days. The witnesses are not at present exposed to endure such terrible outward sufferings as in former times; but those scenes may be re-acted; and they have now abundant cause to prophesy in sackcloth on account of the state of religion. It also appears from the prediction, that the temporary victory of the enemy over the truth will be so entire, that the enemies will think that the witnesses are extirpated. This depressed state of real christianity is considered to relate only to the western church. God will revive his work, when it seems to be dead. God put not only life, but courage into them. God can make the dry bones to live. It is the Spirit of life from God that quickens dead souls, and shall quicken the dead bodies of his people, and his dying interest in the world. The effect of this upon their enemies was, that great fear fell upon them. The revival of God's work and witnesses will strike terror into the souls of his enemies. Where there is guilt, there is fear; and a persecuting spirit, though cruel, is a cowardly spirit.

Observe their ascension. By heaven we may understand, either some more eminent station in the church, the kingdom of grace in this world, or a high place in the kingdom of glory above. It will be no small part of the punishment of persecutors, both in this world, and at the great day, that they see the faithful servants of God greatly honoured and advanced. To this honour they did not attempt to ascend, till God called them. The Lord's witnesses must not be weary of suffering and service,

nor hastily grasp at the reward; but stay till their Master calls them, then they may gladly ascend to him. The consequence of their ascension was a mighty shock and convulsion in the anti-christian empire; and many who fought under the banner of antichrist were slain by it. Events alone can determine the precise meaning of this. The fear of God fell upon many. They were convinced of their errors, superstitions, and idolatry; and by true repentance, and embracing the truth, they gave glory to the God of heaven. Thus when God's work and witnesses revive, the devil's work and witnesses fall before him. And if the slaying of the witnesses is future, as appears probable, it is important that christians should be aware of it, and act accordingly.

3. "I will give unto my two witnesses that they may prophesy."—*Schlotfeldt*.

3, 4 The true spiritual church of Christ, or collective body of the faithful, is here presented to our view, under three different emblems. 1. That of two witnesses prophesying in sackcloth, the garb of mourning, during the period of 1260 days, and testifying against the general corruption and degeneracy of the professing church. 2 Under the symbol of the two candlesticks, as holding forth the light of truth to a world involved in spiritual darkness. 3. As two olive-trees, to denote the abundant supplies of the Holy Spirit, at all times given to the true church. The meaning of the whole passage seems to be, that in the midst of the general corruption of the visible church, God would raise up a small number of faithful men, a truly spiritual church, who should witness for the truth, during the whole 1260 days, which is the same as the forty-two months when the gentiles were to occupy the holy city.—*Cunningham*. This is the view of many of the old commentators, but *Faber* adopts that of bishop Lloyd, that the waldenses and albigenses are specially meant, and their slaughter in 1686. *Tittinger, Fleming*, and others thought that interpretation worthy of attention. — The number "two" does not relate to their number, but to their witness bearing; two being the number God ordained as sufficient to establish evidence. We must not think any particular church intended here.—*Pool's Annotations*.

12. *Scott* considers that all real christians who boldly professed their religion may be considered as uniting in this testimony; yet that ministers, especially bold and zealous men, who attempted reformation, were the witnesses primarily intended. That the time of their prophesying in sackcloth, before they are slain and rise again, must extend through the whole 1260 days, and cannot terminate till these are ended. This general and successful war of the beast, against the witnesses of Christ, may be conducted under another form and under other pretences than former assaults. Papal persecutors were often contented infidels, and the prevalence of infidelity renders it not wholly impossible that the beast may change his ground and method of attack, though popery itself is far more deeply rooted

in a vast proportion of professed christians than is generally supposed. But the apparent extirpation of genuine christianity in the western church will make way for more glorious times. It does not follow, that from the suppression of public testimony to the truth, there will be no true christianity. It is not improbable that the prevalence of true christianity will provoke this persecution, but that many will meet together, solely for the worship of God, and that books, previously circulated, containing clear and practical religious instruction, will, in a very great degree, supply the want of public ordinances, during this short interruption, and that the means previously used, nay, the seed we are now sowing, may be abundantly prospered in bringing forward the glorious times which shall succeed this event. *Scott*, in 1818, avows his full conviction that the transactions predicted under the emblems of verses 7 to 12 had not taken place. *Modc* considers that the slaughter of the witnesses can only be referred to about the end of the 1260 days, and that it will not be such as to extinguish the persons or whole materials of the reformed churches, but only the public fabric of the reformation.

Ver. 14—19. The sounding of the seventh and last trumpet is preceded by the usual warning and demand of attention. Then the seventh angel sounded. The saints and angels in heaven rose from their seats, and fell upon their faces, and worshipped God with reverence and humility. They thankfully recognise the right of our God and Saviour to rule and reign over all the world, ver. 15. They give him thanks because he has asserted his rights, and exerted his power. They rejoice that his reign shall never end; none shall ever wrest the sceptre out of his hand. But the nations met God's wrath with their own anger. It was a time when God was taking just revenge upon the enemies of his people, recompensing tribulation to those who had troubled them. It was a time in which he was beginning to reward his people's faithful services and sufferings; and their enemies fretted against God, and so increased their guilt, and hastened their destruction.

By the opening the temple of God in heaven, may be meant, that there was a more free communication between heaven and earth; prayer and praises more freely and frequently ascending—graces and blessings plentifully descending. But it rather seems to intend the church of God on earth. In the time of the first temple, under idolatrous and wicked princes, it was shut up and neglected; but under pious and reforming princes, it was opened and frequented.

During the power of antichrist, the temple of God seemed to be shut up. At this opening, the ark of God's testament, or covenant, was seen. This was in the holy of holies; in this ark the tables of the law were kept. In the reign of antichrist, God's law was laid aside, and made void by their traditions and decrees; the scriptures were locked up from the people, and they must not look into these Divine oracles; but now they are opened, now they are brought to the view of all. This is an unspeakable and invaluable privilege: and this, like the ark of the testament, is a token of the presence of God returned to his people, and his favour toward them in Jesus Christ the Propitiation.

Lightnings, voices, thunderings, an earthquake, and great hail, were heard and felt there. The great blessing of the reformation was attended with very awful providences; and by terrible things in righteousness God answered the prayers presented in his holy temple now opened. The anger of the nations against God's righteous authority will bring on the great day of his wrath. The time of the dead, when they shall be judged, shall soon come, ver. 18. Then his faithful servants and friends, both great and small, shall be munificently rewarded, and those who have destroyed the earth, shall themselves be destroyed. In the mean time, through the rended veil, we may see the ark of the covenant, and our God upon a mercy-seat; and humbly approaching him in this new and living way, the most severe sufferings and most awful judgments will do us no harm, and should cause us no consternation.

15 *Whiston* says, that the first six seals and the first six trumpets are all over before the end of the 1260 years of antichrist's reign, and the seventh trumpet, or seven vials contained in it, follow after that time, and are contemporary with the first ages of our Saviour's kingdom.

Vitringa and others trace an analogy between the effects of the seals and the siege of Jericho: as that city fell after seven times sounding a trumpet, which seventh time of sounding was made up of seven blasts; so they consider that the mystical Babylon, the great oppressing city of these days, is to fall at the sound of the seventh trumpet, which contains the pouring out the seven vials. Thus the seventh trumpet may be considered as sounding at the first vial as well as at the last.

18. *Lawman* considers that the word rendered 'judged' is rather to be understood to mean a vindication of the cause of the martyrs for the christian religion, by some act of providence in

its favour. It is frequently used in this sense, and according to the order of the prophecies the general judgment was not till afterwards.

CHAPTER XII.

A description of the church of Christ, under the figure of a woman and of a great red dragon, ver. 1—6. Michael and his angels fight against the devil and his angels, who are defeated, 7—12. The dragon persecutes the church, 13, 14. His vain endeavours to destroy her—he renews his war against her seed, 14—17.

Ver. 1—6. God said he would put enmity between the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent, Gen. 3. 15. Satan and his agents attempted to prevent the increase of the church, by devouring her offspring as soon as it was born. The church, under the common emblem of a woman, the mother of believers, was beheld by the apostle in vision, in heaven. She was clothed with the sun, an emblem of her being justified, sanctified, and rendered full of light by her union with Christ, the Sun of Righteousness. The moon was under her feet, denoting her being superior to the reflected and feebler light of the mosaic dispensation, which was to pass away as changeable. Having on her head a crown of twelve stars, perhaps the doctrine of the gospel preached by the twelve apostles, which is a crown of glory to all true believers. As in pain to bring forth a holy progeny; desirous that the conviction of sinners might end in their conversion. And all who are thus minded should pray fervently, and labour diligently in their several places, for the increase, prosperity, and purity of the church. The great enemy of the church is represented as a dragon, for strength and terror: a red dragon, for fierceness and cruelty. A dragon is a known emblem of Satan and his principal agents or vicegerents on earth, at that time principally embodied in the pagan empire of Rome, the city built upon its seven hills. As having ten horns, divided into ten kingdoms. Having seven crowns upon his head, representing seven forms of government. As drawing with his tail a third part of the stars in heaven, and casting them down to the earth; according to *Vitringa*, persecuting and seducing the ministers and teachers. As standing before the woman to devour her child as soon as it

should be born; vigilant to crush the christian religion in its infancy. These attempts against the church were unsuccessful. She brought forth a race of believers, strong and united, designed, under Christ, to judge the world, by their doctrine and lives now, and with Christ at the great day. This child was caught up to God, and to his throne; taken into his special, powerful, and immediate protection. The christian religion has been from its infancy the special care of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ. Care was taken of the mother as well as of the child. She fled into the wilderness, desolate and distressed, where a place was prepared both for her safety and her sustenance. The church was in an obscure state and dispersed; and this proved her security, through the care of Divine Providence. This state was for a limited time.

In spite of all the malice and opposition of enemies, the church brought forth a manly issue of true and faithful professors; in whom Christ was truly formed anew; even Christ mystical, that Son of God who should rule over the nations, and in whose right his members partake of the same glory: and this blessed progeny was taken into the special protection of God, and, in their several times, glorified with him.—(34.)

Ver. 7—11. The attempts of the dragon not only prove unsuccessful against the church, but fatal to his own interests. The seat of this war was in heaven; in the church of Christ, which is the kingdom of heaven on earth. The parties were Christ, the great Angel of the covenant, and his faithful followers; and Satan and his instruments. The strength of the church lies in having the Lord Jesus for the Captain of their salvation.

There was a great struggle, but the dragon and his angels were not only conquered, but they were cast out into the earth, Luke 10. 18. Pagan idolatry, which was the worshipping of devils, was cast out of the empire by the diffusion of christianity. The conqueror is adored. God has showed himself to be a mighty God; Christ has showed himself to be a strong and mighty Saviour; his own arm has brought salvation, and his kingdom will be greatly enlarged and established. The salvation and the

strength of the church are only to be ascribed to the King and Head of the church. The conquered enemy is described: he was the accuser of the brethren, and accused them before their God night and day. Though he hates the presence of God, yet he is willing to appear there, to accuse the people of God. Let us therefore take heed that we give him no cause of accusation against us; and that, when we have sinned, we presently go in before the Lord, accuse and condemn ourselves, and commit our cause to Christ as our Advocate. See how the victory was gained: the servants of God overcame Satan by the blood of the Lamb, as the meritorious cause. Christ, by dying, destroyed him that hath the power of death, that is, the devil. By the word of their testimony, as the great instrument of war; resolute powerful preaching of the everlasting gospel, is mighty through God, to pull down strong holds. By their courage and patience in sufferings; they loved not their lives so well but they could lay them down in Christ's cause. This their courage and zeal confounded their enemies, convinced many, confirmed the souls of the faithful, and so contributed greatly to this victory.

These were the warriors and the weapons by which christianity overthrew the power of pagan idolatry, and if christians had continued to fight with these weapons, and such as these, their victories would have been more numerous and glorious, and the effects more durable. For victory in this holy war can be obtained only by the blood of the Lamb; faith, prayer, a holy life, patient continuance in well-doing, and willingness to venture and suffer to death, with zealous and faithful preachings are what we must use to share the triumphs of the early christians.

The redeemed overcame by a simple reliance on the blood of Christ, as the only ground of their hopes. And in this we must resemble them. We must not blend any thing else with this. We must not endure the thought of uniting any work of ours in any degree whatever with Christ's meritorious death and passion. We must make him our only foundation, and glory in him alone.—(61.)

7. *Woodhouse* says, "The passage beginning ver. 7, and ending ver. 13, should be read as in a parenthesis, because it is plainly no part of the prophecy, but of a date far prior to the

history related theréto, such as is alluded to in Jude 6, and 2 Peter 2. 4; for ver. 6 and 14 contain the same matter and give the same information, showing the junction to be complete. It is a warfare or rebellion, of which Satan was the leader in heaven, whence being expelled, he attempts to pursue the same course on earth.—He made use of the roman empire, its capital, city, and kingdoms, as instruments of his successful attack on the christian church."

Faber says, "Heaven, when interpreted, similarly denotes the imperial powers of temporal government, and this passage may be referred to the contest whether the imperial government of Rome should be christian or pagan."

10. "Into the earth." This denotes the greatness of the fall of Satan, his loss of power, and the meanness and low estate of the persons he had the power of, after the abolition of paganism among the rulers of the roman empire. These were the savage people, and the antichristian party.—*Gill*.

Ver. 12—17. The church and all her friends might well be called to praise God for deliverance from pagan persecution, though other trials awaited her; and the devil and his agents prevailed to corrupt the church with heresies, to deform it with scandals, and to rend it in pieces with contentions. But God had taken care of his church; he had conveyed her, as on eagles' wings, into a place of safety provided for her, where she was to continue for a space of time, similar to that mentioned, Dan. 7. 25.

The wilderness; a place desolate, and full of serpents and scorpions, uncomfortable and destitute of provisions; yet a place of safety as well as of solitariness and retirement.—(27.)

But obscurity could not protect the woman; the old subtle serpent, who at first lurked in paradise, followed the church into the wilderness, and cast out a flood of water after her to carry her away. This is explained by many to mean the invasions of barbarians by which the western empire was overwhelmed, for the adherents to paganism encouraged these irruptions in the hope of subverting christianity. But the victors united themselves to the vanquished, and formed one people with them, and embraced, in form at least, the christian religion. Ungodly men, for their secular interests, protected the church amidst these convulsions, and the subversion of the empire did not help the cause of idolatry. Even worldly men assist the church when the Lord is pleased to use them. Or, this may be meant of a flood of error, by which the church of God was in danger of being

overwhelmed and carried away. The church of God is in more danger from heresies than from persecutions; and heresies are as certainly from the devil as open force and violence. God opened a breach of war, and the flood was in a manner swallowed up thereby, and the church enjoyed some respite. When men choose new gods, then there is danger of war in the gates. The devil, thus defeated in his designs upon the universal church, turns his rage against particular persons and places; his malice against the woman pushes him on to make war with the remnant of her seed. They were but a remnant, for superstitions and errors of various kinds and corruptions had increased exceedingly. This war was for no other reason than because they kept the commandments of God, and held the testimony of Jesus Christ. Their fidelity to God and Christ, in doctrine, worship, and practice, exposed them to the rage of Satan and his instruments; and such fidelity will expose men still, less or more, to the end of the world, when the last enemy shall be destroyed.

14. This prophecy shows that the true church of Christ would be invisible, as a community, for a period of 1260 days; and during all that time a harlot, pretending to be the spouse of Jesus Christ, was to propagate her idolatries successfully and extensively throughout the world. The several protestant churches, having no connexion with each other in government ordinances, like the ancient church, constitute only individual members of the universal church, which, as a body politic, is as invisible now as it was in the tenth century.—*Fraser*.

CHAPTER XIII.

A wild beast rising out of the sea, to whom the dragon gives his power, 1—10. And another beast, which has two horns like a lamb, and speaks as a dragon, exercising all the power of the former beast, 11—15. And obliging all to worship its image, and receive its mark, as persons devoted to it, 16—18.

Ver. 1—10. The apostle, standing on the shore, saw a savage beast rise out of the sea; a tyrannical, idolatrous, persecuting power, springing up out of the commotions which took place in the world. The more monstrous every thing about it was, the better suited, as an emblem, to set forth the mystery of iniquity and tyranny. It was a most horrid, hideous monster! In some parts of the description there seem to be

allusions to Daniel's vision of the four beasts, which represented the four monarchies, Dan. 7. One of those beasts was like a lion, another like a bear, and another like a leopard; this beast was a composition of those three, with the fierceness, strength, and grasping nature, and swiftness of them all. The seven heads and the ten horns seem to designate several powers or forms of government; the ten crowned horns its princes; the word blasphemy on its forehead proclaims its direct enmity and opposition to the glory of God.

It appears to be that worldly tyrannical domination, which for many ages, even from the times of the babylonish captivity, had been hostile to the church; for then the first beast began to oppress and persecute the righteous for righteousness' sake, but more especially under the fourth beast of Daniel, (the roman empire,) which has afflicted the saints with many bloody persecutions.—(101.)

The source and spring of its authority was the dragon. It was set up by the devil, and supported by him to do his work, and promote his interest; to succeed those who had formerly done so. A dangerous wound was given him, yet unexpectedly healed. Some think that by this wounded head we are to understand the abolishing of pagan idolatry; and by the healing of the wound, the introducing popish idolatry, the same in substance with the former, only in a new dress, but which as effectually answers the devil's design. Honour and worship was paid to this infernal monster; the world admired its power, and policy, and success. They worshipped the dragon that gave power, and they worshipped the beast—they paid honour and subjection to the devil and his instruments; they submitted to the same persecuting power as before, only in another form. It exercised an infernal power and policy, setting up blasphemous and enormous claims, entrencing upon the peculiar honours and prerogatives of God himself, requiring men to render that honour to creatures which belongs to God. The malice of the devil shows itself against the blessed inhabitants of heaven: these are above the reach of his power; all he can do is to blaspheme them; but sometimes he is permitted to triumph over, and trample upon the

saints on earth. Yet the devil's power and success is limited; this reign is to continue forty and two months, suitable to the other prophetic characters of the reign of antichrist. It is limited also as to the persons and people subject to his will and power; it will be only those whose names are not written in the Lamb's book of life. Christ had a chosen remnant, redeemed by his blood, recorded in his book, sealed by his Spirit; and, though the devil and antichrist might overcome their bodies, and take away the natural life, they could never conquer their souls, nor prevail with them to forsake their Saviour, and revolt to his enemies.

Perseverance in the faith of the gospel, and true worship of God, in this great hour of trial and temptation, which would deceive all but the elect, is the character of those registered in the book of life, and shows that those who endure to the end shall be saved; and that salvation through Christ belongs to none but those who shall persevere. A powerful motive and encouragement to constancy, the great design of the whole Revelation, and which is kept in view in every part of it.—(89)

There is a demand of attention to what is here discovered of the great sufferings and troubles of the church, and an assurance given, that when God has accomplished his work on mount Zion, his refining work, then he will turn against the enemies of his people, and those who have killed with the sword, shall themselves fall by the sword, and those who led the people of God into captivity, shall themselves be made captives. Here is what will be proper exercise for the patience and faith of the saints; patience under the prospect of such great sufferings, and faith in the prospect of so glorious a deliverance. No computation can be made of the numbers put to death in different ways on account of their maintaining the profession of the gospel, and opposing the corruptions by which it has been attacked.

1. When the western roman empire was broken by the ten nations of the goths, ten primary kingdoms arose out of its fragments; and these may be said to have sprung up at the same time, or during the course of the same season, namely, of the disruption and spoliation of the empire. These royal horns were to be distinguished by the remarkable circumstance of their receiving power as kings conjointly

with the beast. Their dominions should be governed with independent sway, not to the exclusion of the beast, but in conjunction with him. If we turn to history, we may be satisfied as to the accuracy of this prediction.—*Faber.*

2. This beast, representing the roman empire, was, as it were, composed of the qualities of the three former monarchies which were past. Satan did, by all means, forward the power and authority of this empire, advancing it by frauds and cruelties, that it might serve his purposes.—*Bishop Hall.*

—We must look out for the beast, to find him by the properties of his nature, and by the effects of his government upon earth. The beast, or brutal nature of the life of man, is what the dragon exalts and empowers with all his might, as his vicegerent, to have dominion over the inhabitants of the earth, for by this nature only he can have access now to us, and power over us. The general properties of this nature, as here personified, are, to be led without reason, by mere sense, to satisfy the sensual imaginations and lusts of the flesh, and to do all by brutish violence and force, and to destroy all that opposes its will. The government this nature affects is absolute, to have all in subjection to its will; so it rules over others, as men rule over beasts, guiding them by mere sensual and imaginary inducements, which have no relation to the will of God. How many rulers have made these properties of their way to be their glory, is apparent. But the lamb-like nature of the life of man, and the way of government suitable thereto, is what Christ, as spiritual, exalts in the societies of men.—*Durie.*

5. *Whitaker* and others fully expose these blasphemies. *Doddridge* says, They must have very little acquaintance with the blasphemous titles assumed or admitted by the popes, who discern not in them a very remarkable illustration of this circumstance of the prophecy.

8. Christ is called a Lamb, because he was destined to be a sacrifice for sin, like the lambs offered under the Mosaic law. And, though he did not come into the world till it had existed 4000 years, yet he is said to have been slain from the foundation of the world. And justly may he be spoken of under these terms, because, although he was not slain in fact till about thirty years after his incarnation, he was offered in sacrifice to God from the very beginning of the world.—*Simson.*

Ver. 11—18. Those that understand the first beast of a secular power, take the second to intend a spiritual and ecclesiastical power, which acts under the disguise of religion and charity to the souls of men. This second beast had two horns like a lamb, but did not come up from the sea; not out of the wars and tumults of the nations, as the first, but out of the earth, silently and gradually, as plants spring up. It was a spiritual dominion, professing to be derived from Christ, and exercised at first in a gentle manner, but soon showed a mouth, that spake like the dragon; it shows the horns of a lamb, pretends to

be the vicar of Christ upon earth, and so to be vested with his power and authority; but its speech betrayed it; for it gives forth those false doctrines, and cruel decrees, which show it to belong to the dragon, and not to the Lamb.

The ecclesiastical empire, represented by the second beast, will specially claim to be the true prophet or minister of the Lamb; but, however it may assume the outward form of a lamb, it is to be regarded by the faithful only in the light of a false prophet, or an insincere minister of the gospel of Christ.—(32.)

It exercises all the power of the former beast, ver. 12. It promotes the same interest, pursues the same design, to draw men from worshipping the true God, to worship those who by nature are no gods, and to subject the souls and consciences of men to the will and authority of men, in opposition to the will of God. This design is promoted by popery as well as by paganism, by the crafty arts of infidelity as well as by the secular power, all serving the interests of the devil, though in different manners. This second beast carried on its interests and designs, by methods whereby men should be deceived, and prevailed with to worship the former beast in the new image, or shape, or likeness, now made for it. 1. By lying wonders, pretended miracles. The beast would pretend to bring down fire from heaven, to do things that seem very wonderful, by which unwary persons may be deluded. 2. By excommunications, severe censures; whereby followers of the beast pretend to cut men off from Christ, and to cast them into the power of the devil, but deliver them over to the secular power, that they may be put to death, and thus are justly charged with killing those whom they cannot corrupt. 3. By allowing none to enjoy natural or civil rights, who will not worship that beast which is the image of the pagan beast. It is made a qualification for buying and selling, as well as for places of profit and trust, that they make open profession of their subjection and obedience, which is receiving the mark in their forehead, and that they oblige themselves to use all their interest, power, and endeavour, to promote the authority of the beast, which is receiving the mark in their right hands.

To make an image to the beast, whose deadly wound was healed, would be, to give visibility and authority to his worship, or to require implicit obedience to his commands. To give life unto an image is to convert it into a living agent, and so this image is said to speak and to act, and with such effect, as to cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast, should be destroyed. To worship the image of the beast, implies deference and subjection to those things which stamp the character of the picture, and render it the image of the beast.—(23)

The number of the beast is given so as to show the infinite wisdom of God, and exercise the wisdom of men. The number is the number of a man, computed after the usual manner among men, and it is 666. The object of investigation is the number of the beast, by means of calculation. The beast, whose number is to be sought, is the first beast, whose image is the object of idolatrous worship; and its number seems to be either identified, or nearly connected with its mark and its name, ver. 17. This connexion will be seen more clearly by referring to ch. 14. 11. The common method of interpretation has been that of ascertaining names, which contain the numeral letters of the greek alphabet, amounting to the number 666. But this method of calculation has fallen into discredit, by the fact, resulting from experience, that there is no end to the multitude of names which may be thus composed. Scarcely has a single controversy started up to which this number may not be applied, and it may reasonably be doubted whether the true mode of calculation has yet been discovered.—(101)

But he who has wisdom and understanding in these things will see that all the enemies of God are numbered and marked out for destruction; that the term of their power will soon expire, and that all nations shall submit to our King of righteousness and peace.

11. The generality of interpreters confine this second beast to the papal power, and consider the two horns as symbolical of the regular and secular clergy, or of the spiritual and temporal power of the papacy. *Cuninghame* considers it is evidently an ecclesiastical character, and the same personage who is afterwards described as the false prophet. *Crescener* says, "It is a succession of persons, having the supreme power in ecclesiastical affairs."

Daubuz says, "As the former wild beast denotes the antichristian civil powers, which were to be in the roman empire during the second general period of the church, so the antichristian ecclesiastical powers, in the said empire, during the said space of time, are the beast here intended; and consequently the two horns are the successive lines of the bishops of Rome and Constantinople, having under them the whole body of the corrupted clergy, as the former beast had that of the laity, both these bishops having pretended to be universal monarchs of the church. *Gill* has the same view. *Woodhouse* agrees that the two horns denote the division of the professedly christian world into two portions, the western and the eastern; but, as the power of the patriarch of Constantinople began to fail at an early period, he considers that its place was supplied by the religion of Mohammed, which, founding its pretensions on the Old and New Testament, and aimed with ecclesiastical and secular power, at that time began to apostatize and subdue the east, and formed the true eastern horn, the western horn also being to be dated from the same era, and that, from the origin of the mohammedan religion, it may be esteemed a christian apostasy or a christian heresy, and he draws a parallel between mohammedanism and the papacy.

14. The image of the beast, which is to be worshipped, seems to be that absolute greatness which the second beast attributes to itself, and exercises over the subjects of the first beast in his presence, as ver. 12. He sets up a way of government, as absolute as that of the first beast, who is, in conformity thereto, to establish it, and his power, by the first beast's permission, to give life to the image of his absoluteness, and to give the exercising of his power into the hands of the second beast, to make his power give sentence of death, and to cause sentence to be executed against all that would not acknowledge his authority.—*Purc.*

The image of the beast we apprehend to be a counterpart of that system of idolatry and intolerance which prevailed in ancient Rome. To this system popery has given life, and caused it to speak so loud that all were compelled to obey its power.—*Hutcheson*

16. It was common among the ancients to have marks on their bodies distinguishing the object of their worship. Ptolemy Philopater, to degrade the jews in Egypt, ordered that they should have the mark of an ivy leaf the badge of his god Bacchus, impressed upon them with a hot iron.—*Prideaux.*

17. *Firbes* says, "All that follow antichrist have his name, but in diverse manner. Some have the character thereof, that is, the name imprinted, and are his proper goods, as having his brand and mark. Some have his name, yet so as they have not his mark, who have not learned the deepness of Satan, neither are antichrist's sworn bondmen. And some have but the number of his name—and are not his sworn marked slaves, but are counted to be so, and are numbered amongst his. He desires to have all men in one of these sorts, and within these who have the number of his name both the other sorts are included.

81. The statement of *Woodhouse*, given in the comment, appears to express all that is most worthy of attention, in reference to a subject upon which more has probably been written

thou upon any other part of the Apocalypse. It may be well to add, that some attempt to apply the number 666 to dates connected with the history of the early ages, and a variety of solutions have been offered, by extracting the square root and other applications of the powers of the numerals; but these efforts of ingenuity may be allowed to pass without further notice. With respect to the many names or titles in which the number of 666 can by ingenuity be found, the most probable seems to be that mentioned by Irenæus, a hearer of Polycarp, a disciple of the apostle who wrote the book. It is *LATINUS* a title frequently applied to the pope and to the church of Rome. As the letters of the greek alphabet are put for numbers, it will be found that those contained in this word in that language, when summed together, amount to 666—*Cunninghame* considers that word is meant: "Eben once adopted it, but afterwards preferred 'apostate'—"*H. Jones* adopts an idea, also maintained by some others, that the greek letters used by the apostle are to be taken as the first letters of words, and that these here meant, signify "christians, strangers to the cross." But there is no aid of conjectures on this subject, and none of them flash upon the mind as carrying conviction of their being correct. *Gill*, in 1747, remarked upon the idea entertained by some, that *Ludovicus*, or *Louis*, the name of the king of France, was designed, as perhaps indicating that the destruction of antichrist would soon follow the downfall of the king of France, an event he thought not very distant. The papists have thought this number could be found in the name of Luther. *Hales* shows that the greek numerals in the name of Mahomet amount to 666, and concludes that it means Mahomet, the false prophet, the founder of islamism, a new ecclesiastical power in the east, the image of the papal in blasphemy and perdition.

— From the definition of antichrist, 1 John 4:3, it appears that the antichrist cannot be a man, or a single person, but a moral body; which, in the time of the apostles, had begun to constitute itself by the side of, and along with the mystical body of Christ; and which, from that time, began to exist in the world, of which the apostle said, "The mystery of iniquity doth already work;" which has existed till our times, which exists at present, well grown and robust, and which, in the end, will let itself be seen in the world, perfect and entire in all its parts, when the mystery of iniquity is entirely accomplished—*Ben-Ezra*. Although himself a romanist and a jesuit, *Ben-Ezra* considers that the beast with two horns is the romish priesthood. He refers to the state of things at the time when Christ came, and says, "The priesthood, even now in a great degree corrupt, may, in that time, corrupt and ruin all, as did the hebrew priesthood—may darken the greater part of believers, may dazzle them, may blind them, may bring them to disavow Christ, and to declare at length for his enemies." He afterwards adds, "Sufficient will it be that the priesthood of these perilous times shall be found in the same state, and with the same dispositions, in which the hebrew priesthood were found at the time of Christ, that is to say, lukewarm, sensual, and worldly; without other desires, without other affections, than belong to the earth, to the world, to the flesh, to self-love, wholly forgetful of Christ and of the gospel."

CHAPTER XIV.

Those who had continued faithful to Christ and his cause, celebrate the praises of God, ver. 1-5. Three angels; one proclaiming the everlasting gospel; another, the downfall of Babylon; and a third, the dreadful wrath of God, which should be poured out upon the worshippers of the beast. Also the blessedness of them that die in the Lord is declared, 6-13. To this is added a vision of Christ, with a sharp sickle, and of a harvest ripe for cutting down, 14-16. And the emblem of a vintage fully ripe and trodden in the winepress of God's wrath, 17-20.

Ver. 1-5. Here is represented a most pleasing sight: the Lord Jesus Christ at the head of his faithful adherents and attendants. Mount Zion is the gospel church. Christ is with his church, and in the midst of her in all her troubles, therefore she is not consumed. His presence secures her perseverance: he appears as a Lamb, a true Lamb, the Lamb of God. A counterfeited lamb rose out of the earth (see the last chapter,) which was really a dragon: here Christ appears as the true paschal Lamb, to show that his mediatorial government is the fruit of his sufferings, and the cause of his people's safety and fidelity. His people appear very honourably. As to their numbers, they are many, even all who are sealed; not one of them lost in all the tribulations through which they have to go. They have the name of God written in their foreheads, they make a bold and open profession of their faith in God and Christ; and this is followed by suitable actings; thus, they are known and approved. Their congratulations and songs of praise were loud as the thunder, or as the voice of many waters, melodious as of harpers; heavenly, before the throne of God; the song was new, suited to the new covenant, unto that new and gracious dispensation of Providence under which they now were; and strangers intermeddled not with their joy; others might repeat the words of the song, but they were strangers to the true sense and spirit of it. It is evident from history there were such persons, even in the darkest times, who ventured, and laid down their lives for the worship and truth of the gospel of Christ. They are described by their purity; they had kept themselves clean from all the wicked

abominations of the antichristian generation. Also, by their constant and stedfast adherence to Christ; they follow the Lamb, whithersoever he goes; they follow the direction of his word, Spirit, and providence, leaving it to him to lead them into what duties and difficulties he sees fit. And by their former designation to this honour, ver. 4. Some of the children of men are, by redeeming mercy, distinguished from others. These were the first fruits to God, and to the Lamb, his choice ones, eminent in every grace, and the earnest of many more who should be followers of them, as they were of Christ. Their hearts were right with God; and they were freely pardoned in Christ; he is glorified in them, and they in him. May it be our prayer, our endeavour, our ambition, to be found in this honourable company!

The expression, ver. 5. imports sincerity, as it is opposed to men's judging, who cannot see so far as God. It looks also to the ground of their acceptance, which is not any righteousness of their own, for on that account no man shall be justified, but the righteousness of Christ: that is the ground of their justification before God. In a word, they were indeed sincere; and washed and absolved through Christ's blood, ch. 7. 14. By all which it appears those are really sanctified and justified who are meant here, seeing no hypocrite, ever so well painted, can be without fault before God.—(20.)

1. *Durham* considers that the eyes of the apostle were taken off the enemies of the church to behold her, and he saw that Christ wanted not a church, neither was the church destitute of his care, but both are represented here, though for a long time both were little seen. The number he refers to that of the sealed, ch. 7, showing that none of them were wanting.

4. Christ's pure worshippers are here described according to the phrases of this book, especially where antichrist and his worship are set down.—*Durham*.

Ver. 6—13. The character of the true, faithful christian church having been exhibited, its history now begins to be set forth; while solemn warnings, and instructions, and encouragements, most useful to the faithful, during the times of the beast, are delivered. The progress of the Reformation appears here to be prefigured. These four proclamations are plain in their meaning, that all christians may be encouraged, in the time of trial, to be faithful to their Lord.

The first angel was sent to preach the everlasting gospel. The gospel is everlasting in its nature, and shall be so in its consequences; though all flesh be grass, the word of the Lord endureth for ever. It is a work fit for an angel, to preach this everlasting gospel: such is the dignity, and such is the difficulty of that work! Yet we have this treasure in earthen vessels. It is of great concern to all the world, and to be made known to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people. The gospel is the great means whereby men are brought to fear God, and to give glory to him. The gospel revives the fear of God in the world. When idolatry has crept into the churches of God, by the preaching of the gospel, through the power of the Holy Spirit, men are turned from idols to serve the living God, as the Creator, ver. 7. To worship any god beside him who created the world, is idolatry.

A second angel follows, and proclaims the actual fall of Babylon. The preaching of the everlasting gospel shakes the foundations of antichrist in the world, and hastens its downfall. What God has fore-ordained and foretold, shall be done as certainly as if it were done already. The greatness of the papal Babylon will not prevent her fall, but will make it more dreadful and remarkable. The wickedness of Babylon, in corrupting the nations, will declare the righteousness of God in her utter ruin.

A third angel follows, and gives warning of the Divine vengeance which would overtake all that obstinately adhered to antichrist. If any persist in professing subjection to the beast, and promoting his cause, they must expect to drink deep of the wrath of God. They shall be for ever miserable in soul and body. Christ shall inflict this punishment, the holy angels shall behold and approve it. Idolatry, both pagan and popish, is a sin fatal to those who persist in it. They who refuse to come out of Babylon, and resolve to partake of her sins, must receive of her plagues; the guilt and ruin of such incorrigible idolaters will set forth the excellence of the patience and obedience of the saints. These graces shall be rewarded with salvation and glory, when the treachery and rebellion of others shall be punished with everlasting destruction, ver. 12. The believer is to venture or suffer any thing

in obeying the commandments of God, and professing the faith of Jesus. May God bestow this patience upon us!

The voices of the angels had pronounced the punishment of those who, receiving the antichristian mark, deny their Lord. A voice from heaven, from the throne itself, confirms their denunciations, adding thereto this consolation, that death shall be blessed to the faithful, and introduce them to eternal freedom from pain and trouble.—(101.)

The expectation of immediate happiness was the joy and support of the martyrs. Observe the description of those that are, and shall be blessed—such as die in the Lord, die in the cause of Christ, or rather in a state of union with Christ, such as are found in Christ when death comes. They are blessed in their rest, they rest from all sin, temptation, sorrow, and persecution; there the wicked cease from troubling, there the weary are at rest. They are blessed in their recompence, their works follow them: do not go before as their title, or purchase, but follow them as evidence of their having lived and died in the Lord; the remembrance of them will be pleasant, and the reward glorious, far above the merit of all their services and sufferings. This is confirmed by the testimony of the Spirit, witnessing with their spirits, and with the written word.

Do thou thyself, O Holy Spirit, write this most important truth in our hearts. To die in the Lord is to die in the truth of his faith, in the unity of his body, and in the love of his law. How sweet are transitory labours to those who fix their thoughts on the eternal rest they shall enjoy in God himself!—(94)

9. It may be very well worth inquiring whether there are not some remains of the papal superstition and corruption, even in protestant churches.—*T. Scott*

13. *Guyse* considers that all true believers, who have a saving interest in Christ, are included, as best agreeing with 1 Cor 15. 18; 1 Thess 4. 14, 16, and offering most useful encouragement to the church under her various troubles, in the present state of sin and sorrow.

Ver. 14—20. Expositors are unable to make a consistent application to past events of the passages which follow. They seem to indicate that the warnings and judgments not having produced effectual reformation in the kingdom of the beast, the iniquity of the nations of which it is constituted is filled

up, and they become ripe for judgments, represented by a harvest and a vintage.

1. By a harvest; an emblem sometimes used to signify the gathering of the righteous, when ripe for heaven, by the mercy of God. Here observe, the Lord of the harvest—one like unto the Son of man; he was the same, even the Lord Jesus. He sat on a white cloud; a cloud that had a bright side turned to the church, how dark soever it might be to the wicked. On his head was a golden crown, authority to do whatsoever he would. In his hand a sharp sickle, the instrument of his providences. He had solicitations from the temple to perform this great work; what he did he was desired to do by his people; and, though he was resolved to do this, it should be in return to their prayers. The angels coming from the temple may signify the ministers of the gospel. The harvest work is, to thrust the sickle into the corn, and reap the field; the sickle is death, the field is the world, reaping is cutting down the inhabitants of the earth, and carrying them off. The harvest time is when the corn is ripe, when the believers are ripe for heaven.

It may be thought to refer to the conversion of the Jews and the bringing in the fullness of the gentiles in the latter day; and a great harvest it will be when these multitudes shall be brought in. But it seems best to understand this of the Lord's wheat harvest at the end of the world, when the wheat of the earth shall be gathered into Christ's garner. When Christ shall come in the clouds of heaven, the dead in him will rise first, and the living saints be changed, the earth will be reaped and be cleared of them.—(27)

2. A vintage, ver. 17. The inveterate enemies of Christ and his church are not destroyed till by their sin they are ripe for ruin, and then he will spare them no longer: he will thrust in his sickle. This vintage work was committed to an angel, another angel that came out from the altar, where the sacrifices were consumed: implying that these judgments would constitute a sacrifice to Divine justice. This vintage work was undertaken at the cry of an angel out of the temple, the ministers and churches of God on earth. The work of the vintage consists of the cutting off, and gathering the clusters of the vine, now

ripe, fully ripe, ver. 18, and the casting these grapes into the wine-press. The wine-press is the wrath of God, the fire of his indignation, some terrible calamity, probably the sword, shedding the blood of the wicked.

The casting the vintage into the wine-press of God's wrath, and the treading it without the city, as being no part of the true church, can only be explained by the event. The patience of God towards sinners is the greatest miracle in the world; but, though lasting, it will not be everlasting. When long abused, it turns at last into fury: ripeness in sin is a sure prognostication of judgment at hand. If the flood of God's anger in this life will not wash sinners clean, the deluge of his wrath in the next will wash them quite away. Eternal thanks be to the Lamb who has delivered his people from this dreadful wrath to come.—(73)

18. The symbolical reaping of the harvest, appears to signify the gathering together the elect. See Matt 24, 31. The action of reaping is in the Gospels more than once used as a symbol of the gathering in of Christ's elect, but not of the execution of Divine judgments, while the vintage every where in the prophetic writings is used as a symbol of the wrath of God.—*Channing's* *harvest*. Herein he takes this view with *St Isaac Newton* and *Horley's* *Pareus* says, The harvest shall not only gather the wheat out of the Lord's field into the garner, but also burn the tares that are gathered. But the vintage shall cast and tread all the grapes in the lake of God's wrath. Therefore, by the vintage, the punishment of the wicked seems only to be represented.—The bare reaping of the corn, which is a good fruit, seems to denote no more than the separation of it from the earth.—*Daubuz*. *Gill's* view is given in the comment. He considers the angels from the temple may denote ministering spirits, as well as gospel ministers, and the angel from the altar a minister of Divine justice. *Hutchinson* adopts the view of several modern commentators, that both by the harvest and the vintage we are to understand great temporal calamities to the antichristian kingdoms, and to the popish church. He thinks the harvest the symbol of the one, and the vine of the earth of the other.

20. The blood came even to the horses' bridle, a strong hyperbolical way of speaking, to express vast slaughter and effusion of blood, a way of speaking to be found in the Jewish tal-muds, and in classic authors.—*Noodhouse* See also *Gill*, who thinks the 1600 furlongs may be mentioned in allusion to the length of the land of Palestine.

CHAPTER XV.

A song of praise is sung by the church, ver. 1—4. The temple in heaven is opened, from whence come seven angels with the

seven plagues; and to them one of the living creatures gives seven golden vials full of the wrath of God, 5—8.

Ver. 1—4. Seven angels appeared in heaven; prepared to finish the destruction of antichrist. As the measure of Babylon's sins was filled up, they should now find the full measure of his vindictive wrath. All that had gotten the victory over the beast were spectators and witnesses of this. They stood on or by a sea of glass, representing, as some think, the gospel covenant, and alluding to the brazen sea in the temple, in which the priests were to wash. Or, the mingling with fire may denote the purifying influences of the Holy Spirit.

It shone with a brightness white and clear as crystal, mixed with a beautiful colour red as fire; perhaps an emblem of the spotless purity and efficacy of the atoning blood and righteousness of Christ, whereby he appeased the fiery resentment of Divine justice.—(82) The harps of God signify hearts tempered with joy, and love, and a grateful sense of the mercies of God to them.—(54)

They sing the song of Moses; extolling God's works, and the justice and truth of his ways, in delivering his people and destroying their enemies; they rejoice in hope, and the near prospect of this. They call upon all nations to render to God the fear, glory, and worship due to such a discovery of his truth and justice. The many plagues which the wrath of God inflicts on the wicked, contain things great and marvellous; but none can fully understand them till they have passed through the waves and fiery trials of this evil world, and are made victors over all their adversaries. Yet, while believers stand in this world in tempestuous times, as upon a sea of glass mingled with fire, they may anticipate the triumphs which await their final deliverance, and attempt the song of Moses and the Lamb, while new mercies continually demand new hymns of praise. The more we know of God's wonderful works, the more we shall celebrate his greatness as the Lord God Almighty, the Creator and Ruler of all worlds; but his title of Emmanuel, the King of saints, will particularly endear him to us. Who that considers the power of his wrath, the value of his favour, or the glory of his holiness, would

refuse to fear and honour him alone ? His praise is above heaven and earth.

Ver. 5—8. The seven angels appeared coming out of heaven to execute their commission. Here is allusion to the holiest of all in the tabernacle and temple, where was the mercy-seat, covering the ark of his testimony, where the high priest made intercession, and God communed with his people, and heard their prayers. In the judgments God would execute upon antichrist and his followers, he fulfils the prophecies and promises of his word and covenant, there always before him, and of which he is ever mindful. In this work also he answered the prayers of the people, offered to him by their great High Priest. Heaven avenges his own Son, and our Saviour Jesus Christ, whose offices and authority had been usurped, his name dishonoured, and the great designs of his death opposed by antichrist and his adherents. These angels are prepared for their work, clothed with pure and white linen, and their breasts girded with golden girdles, representing their holiness, and the righteousness and excellence of these dispensations. This was the habit of the high priests when they went in to inquire of God, and came out with an answer from him. It showed that these angels were acting under the Divine appointment and direction. They are the ministers of Divine justice, and do every thing in a pure and holy manner. The instruments by which they were to do this great execution were seven vials, or bowls, filled with the wrath of God. They were armed with the wrath of God against his enemies. Even the meanest creature, when armed with the anger of God, will be too hard for any man in the world. This wrath of God was divided into seven parts, which should successively fall upon the antichristian party. The angels received these vials from one of the four living creatures, one of the ministers of the true church, as in answer to the prayers of the ministers and people of God, and to avenge their cause, in which the angels are willingly employed.

All near the temple were wrapt in clouds, which filled the temple, from the glorious presence of God ; so that no man was able to enter till the work was

finished. The interests of antichrist were so interwoven with the civil interests of the nations, that he could not be destroyed without giving a great shock to all the world ; and the people of God would have but little opportunity to assemble before him, while this great work was doing. For the present, their sabbaths would be interrupted, ordinances of public worship intermitted, and all thrown into general confusion. God himself was now preaching to the church, and to all the world, by terrible things in righteousness ; but when this work was done, then the churches would have rest, the temple would be opened, and the solemn assemblies gathered, edified, and multiplied. The greatest deliverances of the church are brought about by awful and astonishing steps of Providence ; and the happy state of the true church, perhaps implied by the entering into the temple, will not commence till, by the same awful dispensations, obstinate enemies shall be destroyed, and lukewarm, superstitious, or formal christians are purified. Then whatever is unscriptural or antiscritptural in every company being purged away, the whole, brought to purity, unity, and spirituality, shall be firmly established.

CHAPTER XVI.

The seven angels pour out their seven vials of the wrath of God, ver. 1. The first vial is poured out on the earth, 2. The second on the sea, 3. The third on the rivers and fountains, 4—7. The fourth on the sun, 8, 9. The fifth on the seat of the beast, 10, 11. The sixth on the great river Euphrates, 12—16. And the seventh on the air, which shall issue in the total destruction of all antichristian enemies, 17—21.

Ver. 1—7. The word of command was immediately obeyed. Some of the best men, as Moses and Jeremiah, did not readily comply with the calls of God to their work ; but the angels of God excel not only in strength, but in readiness to do the will of God. We are to pray, that the will of God may be done on earth as it is done in heaven. Here is a series of very terrible dispensations of Providence ; of which it is difficult to give the certain meaning, or to make the particular application. But, 1. There seems to be reference and allusion to several of the plagues of Egypt. The sins

were alike, and so were the punishments. 2. These vials have plain reference to the seven trumpets, which represented the rise of antichrist; and we learn hence that the fall of the enemies of the church shall bear some resemblance to their rise. God can bring them down in such ways as they choose to exalt themselves. And the fall of antichrist shall be by degrees, but so as to rise no more. 3. The fall of the antichristian interest shall be universal. All things that belonged to them, or could be serviceable to them, throughout their earth, their air, their sea, their rivers, their cities, all are consigned over to ruin, all accursed for the wickedness of that people. Thus the creation groans and suffers through the sins of men.

The first angel poured out his vial; the contents produced noisome and grievous sores on all who had the mark of the beast. They had marked themselves by their sin, now God marks them by his judgments. It discovered their inward distemper, and was a token of further evil; the plague-tokens appeared. The second angel poured out his vial; it fell upon the sea. It turned the sea into blood, as the blood of a dead man, and every living soul died in the sea. God discovered not only their vanity and falsehood, but their pernicious and deadly nature—that the souls of men were poisoned by that which pretended to be the sure means of health and salvation. The next angel poured out his vial upon the rivers, and upon the fountains of waters; perhaps the emissaries, who, like streams, conveyed the venom and poison of their errors and idolatries from the spring-head through the earth. It turned them into blood; it occasioned the shedding of their blood; the following doxology favours this sense. The instrument God uses in this work is called the angel of the waters, who extols the righteousness of God in this retaliation; for they are worthy; to which another angel answered by a full consent, ver. 7. How infatuated must men be to defy the power of God, who can fight against them by such varied means, and with such irresistible weapons, especially as he continues to beseech his enemies to be reconciled to him, and to share his everlasting favour! No wonder that angels, who witness or execute the Divine vengeance on the ob-

stinate haters of God, of Christ, and of holiness, loudly celebrate the praises of his justice and truth; and adore his awful dispensations, when he brings upon cruel persecutors the tortures they inflicted on his saints and prophets.

1. All the vials have the same object, namely, to destroy the remaining power of the antichristian system, called the beast—*Fraser*. Some, as *Brown*, suppose that partial effusions have long since taken place, but that still more tremendous vials of Divine wrath will yet be poured out upon the antichristian state, which will render their persons and countries miserable. But *Vitringa* and *Danbe* consider, that as the vials here described, used for libations at sacrifices, had the shape of a bowl or cup, from which the liquor was poured at once, it is probable that these Divine judgments will be rapidly executed. By the word rendered vial is meant a sort of paten or basin used at the altars to hold incense, ch. 5. 8, and for various other purposes.

Ver. 8—11. The fourth angel poured out his vial, and that fell upon the sun, ver. 8, 9; perhaps some eminent power; and that which, cherished with warm and fostering influences, shall grow hot against these idolaters, and shall scorch them; which yet would be far from bringing them to repentance. It would cause them to throw out blasphemous speeches against the God of heaven; they were hardened to their ruin. For the heart of man is so desperately wicked that the most complicated miseries never will induce any to repent, without the special grace of God. Hell itself is filled with blasphemies; and those are ignorant of the history of human nature, of the Bible, and of their own hearts, who do not know that the more men suffer, and the more plainly they see the hand of God in their sufferings, the more furiously they often rage against him. Then let sinners now seek repentance from Christ, and the grace of the Holy Spirit, or they will have the anguish and horror of an unhumiliated, impenitent, and desperate heart, turning with enmity against God, as well as tortured by the fire of his indignation; thus adding to their guilt and misery through all eternity.

The fifth angel poured out his vial. The contents fell upon the seat of the beast; upon the mystical Babylon, the head of the antichristian empire. The whole kingdom of the beast was full of darkness and distress; the seat of their policy, the source of all their learning,

and all their knowledge, and all their pomp, and pleasure, becomes a source of darkness, and pain, and anguish. Darkness was one of the plagues of Egypt; it is opposed to lustre and honour, and so forebodes the contempt and scorn to which the antichristian interest should be exposed. Darkness is opposed to wisdom and penetration, and forebodes the confusion and folly which the idolaters and followers of the beast discover at that time. It is opposed to pleasure and joy, and signifies the anguish and vexation of spirit, when their calamities come upon them.

10. The throne of the beast is the seat of diabolical artifice and antichristian iniquity; and whosoever these are arrayed against the kingdom of Christ, there is to be seen a portion of the kingdom of the beast; and commensurate with his power and authority are his throne and sceptre. It is difficult, therefore, to fix upon any local and permanent station for the throne of this tyrannical power, which extends over all people, ch. 13. 8. At some times, and in some particular places, the spirit and power of tyranny, cruelty, and oppression, have been peculiarly prominent. And the eastern apostasy is subjected to the same power as the western — *Bloodhouse*.

Ver. 12—16. The sixth angel poured out his vial upon the great river Euphrates. Some think this prophesies the destruction of the turkish monarchy, and of idolatry, which they suppose will be effected about the same time with that of the papacy, as another antichrist, and thereby a way will be made for the return of the jews, whom they call the princes of the east. Others take it for Rome, as mystical Babylon. And when Rome is destroyed, her river and merchandize must suffer with her. But what did this vial produce? A way is hereby prepared for the kings of the east. Perhaps the removal of these obstructions will open a way for the eastern nations to come into the church of Christ. And if we suppose that both popery and mohammedanism shall fall at the same time, there will then be a more open communication between the western and eastern nations, which may facilitate the conversion of the jews and the fulness of the gentiles. And when this work of God appears, and is about to be accomplished, no wonder if it occasions the last efforts of the great dragon; so that, if possible, he may retrieve his affairs in the world. He will collect all his forces, to make one desperate struggle before all be lost.

The instruments to engage the powers of the earth in this cause and quarrel, are three unclean spirits, like frogs, which come forth, one out of the mouth of the dragon, another out of the mouth of the beast, and a third out of the false prophet. Hell, the secular power of antichrist, and the ecclesiastical power, all combine to send instruments, furnished with hellish malice, with worldly policy, and with religious falsehood and deceit; and these muster up the devil's forces for a decisive battle. To engage the powers of the earth in this war, these instruments would work pretended miracles; the old stratagem of him whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all power, and signs, and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness, 2 Thess. 2. 9, 10. Some think that a little before the fall of antichrist, the pretence of power to work miracles will be revived, and will very much occupy and deceive the world. The field of battle is Armageddon; perhaps Megiddo, near to which Barak overcame Sisera, and all the kings in alliance with him, Judges 5. 19. And in the valley of Megiddo, Josiah was slain. This place had been noted for two events, the first very happy for the church of God, the latter very unhappy; but it should now be the field of the last battle in which the church shall be engaged, and she shall be victorious. This battle required time to prepare for it, see ch. 19. 19, 20. God warns of this great decisive trial, to engage his people to prepare for it, ver. 15. These will be times of great temptation; therefore Christ, by his apostle, called on his professed servants to expect his sudden coming, and to watch, that they might be found in the garments of salvation, and not walk naked, and so be put to shame, as apostates or hypocrites; for the blessing would belong only to the watchful. May we then remember that Christ comes suddenly, that we may watch and give diligence to be found of him without spot and blameless.

However christians may differ as to their views of prophecy, and the times and seasons of events yet to be accomplished, on this one point all are agreed — Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, will suddenly come again to judge the world. While infidels and worldly men scoff at this, all true believers in God's word

seriously and fully expect it. To those living near to Christ, it is an object of joyful hope and expectation, and delay is not desired by them.—(5.)

12. *Vitranga* brings many arguments to show that "the kings from the rising of the sun," do not mean the jews, either converted or unconverted. *Pareus* and *J. Edwards* are among those who apply this vial to the destruction of the mystical Babylon. *Fleming* considers that as the sixth trumpet brought the Turks from beyond the Euphrates, so the sixth vial exhausts their power as the means and way to prepare and dispose the eastern kings and kingdoms to renounce their heathenish and mohammedan errors, and to receive christianity.

15 This alludes to a Jewish custom. When the guard of the temple went their rounds at night and found a Levite asleep on his watch, they set fire to his garments with the torches they carried.—*Lightfoot*.

16. Thus war shall take the world, as the siege of Jerusalem took the jews, by surprise. It is announced by the same terms, see Matt. 24. 42, 43. Yet, as in the instance of the siege, the will be no surprise but to the negligent, the adherents of the idolatrous church, and the general worldly and ineligious portion of mankind. To those whose eyes are fixed in humility upon the signs of the great coming, there will be in the circumstances of the times warning sufficient, if not to enable them to anticipate the precise steps by which the universal convulsion will arrive, at least to ascertain its approach, and to feel the solemn necessity of preparing by a renewed spirit, by a purer morality, and more anxious study of the gospel, for a trial in which all the earth has of strength or greatness will be utterly shaken.—*Croly*.

—The coincidence between this prophecy and the following, as unfulfilled prophecies in the Old Testament, is worthy of special notice by all who would patiently investigate the true meaning, and not run away with hasty, and crude, and partial, though plausible interpretations, grounded on accidental resemblances, *Psa* 149 7—9. *Isa* 31. 63 1—6; *Ezek* 38 33; *Dan* 2 44, 45, 7. 9—12; 11. 40—45, *Mic* 5 10—15; 7. 4—17; *Zech* 14. 12—19 —*T. Scott*.

Ver. 17—21. The seventh and last angel poured forth his vial, which was the finishing stroke of the downfal of Babylon. This plague fell on the air, upon the prince of the power of the air. It produced a thankful voice from heaven pronouncing that now the work was done. The church triumphant in heaven saw it, and rejoiced; the church militant on earth saw it, and became triumphant. A mighty commotion on the earth, an earthquake, shook the very centre; and was ushered in by thunder and lightnings. Babylon was divided into three parts, called the cities of the nations, ver. 19, perhaps having had rule over the nations, and incorporating

something of the Jewish, something of the pagan, and something of the Christian religion, and so three cities in one. God remembered this great and wicked city; though for some time he had seemed to have forgotten her idolatry and cruelty, yet now he gives unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath. And this downfal extended further than to the seat of antichrist; it reached from the centre to the circumference; and every island, and every mountain, that seemed by nature and situation the most secured, were carried away in this ruin.

Though it fell upon the antichristian party as a dreadful storm, as if hailstones of a talent weight each, yet they were so far from repenting, that they blasphemed God who thus punished them. Here was a dreadful plague of the heart; a spiritual judgment more dreadful and destructive than all the rest. The greatest calamities that can befall men, will not bring to repentance without the grace of God working with them. Those that are not made better by the judgments of God, always are the worse. To be hardened in sin and enmity against God by his righteous judgments, is a certain token of utter destruction.

17. No scheme for applying the vials, as yet offered, appears to be satisfactory. Interpreters usually have applied them to the times in which they have lived, and each has been more successful in pointing out the errors of others, than in making a satisfactory arrangement. These effusions are now generally applied more or less to events connected with the French revolution. *Hutchinson* distributes them as follows: 1. The reformation. 2. Wars consequent on the reformation to 1790. 3. French revolution. 4. The sun of despotism. 5. The reaction in a struggle for civil and religious liberty. 6. The defection of the kingdoms of the pope. 7. Final overflow of the western apostasy. The course pursued by *Woodhouse*, to view the pouring forth of the vials as the commencing, continued, and universal punishment of the followers of antichrist, without attempting any minute application, seems at present the only safe course for the commentator.

CHAPTER XVII.

One of the angels, who had the vials, explains the meaning of the former vision of the antichristian beast that was to reign 1260 years, and then to be destroyed, ver. 1—3. And interprets the mystery of the woman, and the beast that had seven heads and ten horns, who is overcome, 7—18.

Ver. 1—6. One of the angels who

poured out the vials, conversed with the apostle, and called him to see the judgment of that great antichristian power which exceeded all other churches, societies, or empires, in seducing men to commit idolatry and abominations. Rome clearly appears to be meant in this chapter; even papists allow this. The only question is, whether Rome pagan or Rome papal is meant. But pagan Rome never seduced the kings of the earth to join her idolatries: she subdued and ruled them with her military power, not by artifices and flatteries; she left them in general to their ancient usages and worship. But it is well known that by subtilty and politic management, with all the deceptableness of unrighteousness, Rome papal has obtained and preserved an ascendancy over kings and nations, so that their power has been employed in support of her tyranny.

The appearance the harlot made was gay and gaudy. Here were the allurements of worldly honour and riches, pomp and pride, suited to sensual and worldly minds. Great prosperity, pomp, and splendour, feed the pride and lusts of the human heart, yet they form no security against the Divine vengeance. The golden cup represents the various fascinating allurements, impostures, and delusions, by which this mystical Babylon has always obtained and preserved her influence, and seduced others to join her abominations. The golden cup in the hand of Babylon and her daughters, will reconcile most men to the mysteries of iniquity connected with it. Her principal seat and residence was upon the beast that had seven heads and ten horns; Rome, the city on seven hills, infamous for idolatry, tyranny, and blasphemy. Her name was written on her forehead, as such characters of old used to make themselves publicly known. She is named from her place of residence, Babylon the great. But that we may not take it for the old Babylon, literally so called, it is declared that there is a mystery in the name; it is some other great city resembling the old Babylon. She is named, from her infamous practices, not a harlot, but a mother of harlots; training them up to idolatry and all sorts of wickedness; the parent and nurse of all false religion and filthy conversation. She satiated herself with

the blood of the saints and martyrs of Jesus. She drank their blood with greediness, she intoxicated herself; it was so pleasant to her, that she never was satisfied. We cannot but wonder at the oceans of christian blood shed by men called christians; but our wonder will abate when we consider these prophecies; and the awful fact is a testimony to the truth of the gospel. And let all beware of a splendid, lucrative, or fashionable religion. Let us avoid the mysteries of iniquity, and study diligently the great mystery of godliness, that we may learn humility, simplicity, self-denial, and gratitude, in the life and example of Christ; for the more we resemble him, the less we shall be liable to be deceived by antichrist.

2. *Hurd* shows why this term, and not that of adultery, is here used, and points out papal Rome, contrary to those who would assume that the lighter term denotes pagan Rome. The emblem is Babylon, a pagan idolatrous city, which never entered into any close contract with Jehovah. That city being noted as the first of idolatrous cities, was the fittest to be an emblem of the enormous guilt and extensive influence of idolatrous Rome. Pagan idolatry also is, for the most part, exposed by the ancient prophets, under the term of lying vanities. *Hurd* fully meets the objections of romanists, and shows that the terms here used are especially applicable to papal Rome.

5. It is stated, on good authority, that the word "mystery" was formerly inscribed on the front of the papal tiara.

—The following is the statement of the romish annotator, and the reply of his protestant opponent. "This great harlot sometimes signifies Rome, especially which, when the apostle wrote this, did persecute the church of God; but other wise it signifies the whole city of the devil, that is, the universal body of the reprobate. Rome was Babylon when St. John wrote this, and then was Nero and the rest figures of antichrist, and that city the resemblance of the principal place, whosoever it be, that antichrist shall reign in about the latter end of the world.—The pope of Rome shall not be antichrist, but shall be persecuted by antichrist, and driven out of Rome if it be possible."—*Rhemish Annotations*. So manifest is the light of truth that you are compelled to confess in the end that antichrist shall have his seat in Rome. But that you would discharge the pope and the papish church, whom all the prophecies so amply agree to be antichrist and his city, you labour in vain.—*Fulk*.

Ver. 7—14. The apostle wondered at the sight of this woman: the angel opens this vision to him, and tells the apostle what was meant by the beast on which the woman sat. This beast was, and is not, and yet is: it was a seat of idolatry and persecution: and is not, not in the ancient form, which was

pagan; and yet it is, it is truly the seat of idolatry and tyranny, though of another sort and form. It ascends out of the bottomless pit; idolatry and cruelty are the issue and product of hell, shall return thither, and go into perdition. It shall ascend; it is about to ascend. This determines the rise of the beast, a period after the prediction was delivered; consequently Rome pagan cannot be meant, which had risen long before. It would deceive into a stupid and blind submission all the inhabitants of the earth within the sphere of its influence, except the remnant of the elect.

The expression, "whose names were not written in the book of life," shows that this revival of a persecuting power should be greatly owing to some members of the church itself, who had lost the spirit and temper of true christianity, and were led by what they thought their worldly interests. The book of life is an allusion to the registers in which the names of persons were enrolled as freemen of a city. To be registered in the book of life, is to be registered as the people of God to whom the promise of eternal life is given.—(89.)

This beast has seven heads. Seven mountains—the seven hills on which Rome stands: and seven kings—seven sorts of government. Five were extinct when this prophecy was written; one was then in being, the other was yet to come. This beast, directed by the papacy, makes an eighth governor, and sets up idolatry again. This beast had ten horns, which are said to be ten kings which have as yet received no kingdoms; they should not rise up till the roman empire was broken in pieces; but should reign, as it were, one hour with her, for that time be very unanimous and very zealous in her interest, entirely devoted to it, divesting themselves of their prerogatives and revenues, from unaccountable fondness for her.

There is a war between the beast and his followers, and the Lamb and his followers. The beast and his army appear much stronger than the Lamb and his army. But the victory is gained by the Lamb; Christ must reign till all enemies be put under his feet. The ground and reason of the victory is in the character of the Lamb; he is the King of kings, and Lord of lords. He has, both by nature and by office, su-

preme dominion and power over all things; all the powers of earth and hell are subject to his control. His followers are called out to this warfare, they are fitted for it, and will be faithful in it. Such an army under such a Commander will overcome.

12. When the roman empire declined under the invasions of the goths and other barbarians, ten kingdoms arose, which are enumerated by different writers. Though much varied in respect to the people of which they were composed, their number has been nearly the same; and on an average, in the long course of 1400 years, reaching to our times, the number ten would be found to predominate. Considering the changes to which all nations are exposed, and which have prevailed in other quarters of the globe, it is indeed a wonder that the ten european kingdoms should subsist as they have done. Their character and designation has been exactly fulfilled. They have imbibed the doctrines of the harlot, and have executed her bloody decrees. But the time seems already to have dawned when they shall perform their appointed part in her downfall and disgrace.—*Woodhouse.*

—Are not the annals of every country, and of almost every period, stained by the blood of the disciples of the Lamb? and has not the bitterest opposition of the ruling powers been levelled against those distinguished for purity of faith, of practice, and of outward worship?—*Towers.*

Ver. 15—18. The victory is the more remarkable, from the vast multitude subject to the beast and to the harlot. She sat upon, that is, presided over many waters; many multitudes of people, and nations, of all languages. She reigned not only over kingdoms, but over the kings, and they were tributaries, and vassals. Four distinct words, all in the plural, describe the extensive dominion of Rome over all the kingdoms belonging to that communion, and their remote dependencies even in the distant parts of the world.

God showed his powerful influence over the minds of great men; their hearts were in his hand, and he turned them as he pleased; for it was of God, and to fulfil his will, that these kings agreed to give their kingdom unto the beast. God so influenced the hearts of these kings by his power over them, and by the dispensations of his providence, that they fulfilled his will; did those things, without intending it, which he purposed and predicted. And it was of God that afterward their hearts were turned against the harlot to hate her and to destroy her. They shall at length see their folly, and how they have been bewitched and enslaved by her, and, from

just resentment, shall be made instruments of Providence in her destruction. To complete the description given of this woman and the beast she sat upon, she was declared to be that great city which reigned over the kings of the earth, when John had this vision; and every one knows Rome to be that city.

Believers will be received to the glory of the Lord, when wicked men will be destroyed in a most tremendous manner; and their concurrence in sin will be turned into the most bitter hatred and rage, while they eagerly assist in tormenting each other. But the Lord's portion is his people, his counsel shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure, and no counsel or machinations of men or creatures can do more than fulfil his words, and that purpose which he has purposed in himself to the praise of his glory, and to the everlasting happiness of all his chosen and faithful servants.

18 Words cannot be more determinate than these; and if its dominion had not been mentioned, the city on seven hills, ver. 9, is so characteristic of Rome, that the name itself could not have pointed it out more plainly; as must be evident to all who recollect what the Latin writers have said on this subject. As thus described, it is even more precise than the proper name would have been, it excludes, by the peculiarity of the attributes, any other application — *Hurd*

CHAPTER XVIII.

Another angel from heaven proclaims the fall of mystical Babylon, ver. 1-3. Another voice from heaven admonishes the people of God, let them partake of her sins, they partake of her plagues, 4-8. Represents the lamentations over her, 9-19. And calls upon the church to rejoice in God's taking righteous vengeance upon her, whose utter and irrecoverable ruin is signified, 20-24.

Ver. 1-8. The downfall and destruction of the mystical Babylon are fully determined in the counsels of God. Another angel comes from heaven. He had not only light in himself to discern the truth of his own prediction, but to inform and enlighten the world about that great event; and he had power to accomplish it. This seems to be Christ himself, or an emblematical representation of his coming to destroy his enemies, and to diffuse the light of his gospel through all nations. He repeatedly proclaimed, with a strong voice, implying his power and

authority, that Babylon the great was fallen, totally and finally. That it was not only become desolate, but a sort of hell upon earth. She is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and the cage of every unclean and hateful bird: see Isa. 21. 9. It seems to describe not so much her sin of entertaining idols, which are truly called devils, as her punishment. The reason of this ruin is declared; for though God is not obliged to give any account of what he sees fit to perform, yet he is pleased to do so; especially in the dispensations of providence that are most awful. The wickedness of Babylon had been very great; she had not only forsaken the true God herself, and set up idols, but had with great art and industry drawn all sorts of men into spiritual adultery, and by her wealth and luxury retained them in her interest. The spiritual merchandise, by which multitudes have wickedly lived in affluence, by the sins and follies of mankind, seem principally intended. And when collective bodies are ripe for vengeance, their sins will be punished in this world, though individuals often are reserved unto the wrath to come.

Fair warning is given to all that expect mercy from God, that they should not only come out of this Babylon, but assist in her destruction. God may have a people even in Babylon, some who belong to the election of grace. But God's people shall be called out of Babylon, and called effectually, while those that are resolved to partake with wicked men in their sins, must receive of their plagues. When the sins of a people reach up to heaven, the wrath of God will reach down to the earth. And though private revenge is forbidden; yet God will proportion the punishment of sinners, to the measure of their wickedness, pride, and security. When destruction comes on a people suddenly, the surprise is a great aggravation of their misery. This summons concerns all people, in every age. Those who believe in Christ, and worship God in the spirit, must separate from the mystical Babylon, and all who copy her example of idolatry, persecution, cruelty, and tyranny; and must avoid being partakers of her sins, even if they have renounced her communion, or they may expect to be involved in her plagues.

Ver. 9—19. Babylon's friends make a doleful lamentation for her fall. The mourners had shared her sensual pleasures, and gained by her wealth and trade—the kings, and the merchants of the earth; the kings of the earth, whom she flattered into idolatry, allowing them to be arbitrary and tyrannical over their subjects, while obsequious to her; and the merchants, those who trafficked for her indulgences, pardons, dispensations, and preferments; these will mourn, because by this craft they got their wealth. They durst not come nigh; even Babylon's friends will stand at a distance from her fall. Though partakers in her sins, and in her sinful pleasures and profits, they are not willing to share her plagues. The cause of their mourning is not their sin, but their punishment. They did not lament their fall into idolatry, and luxury, and persecution, but their fall into ruin—the loss of their traffic, and of their wealth and power. The spirit of antichrist is a worldly spirit, and that sorrow is a mere worldly sorrow; they do not lament for the anger of God, but for the loss of outward comforts. The wealth and merchandise of this city all was suddenly and irrecoverably lost. The magnificence and riches of the ungodly will avail nothing, but augment and render more intolerable the vengeance inflicted. It is not requisite to accommodate the various particulars to the several kinds of spiritual merchandise, by which romish ecclesiastics have been enriched at the expense of the people. But these are evidently alluded to, when not only slaves, but the souls of men are mentioned as articles of commerce, and certainly have enriched ecclesiastical Rome, to the deceiving and destroying the souls of millions, while by feigned words they made merchandise of them. Nor can we say that this merchandise has been peculiar to the Roman antichrist, and exclusively her guilt. Souls are traded for by all who undertake the care of them for the sake of the profit, or render religious profession or the sacred function subservient to worldly interest, ease, and indulgence. But all this shall come to nothing, and those who have shared the gains of this commerce, spiritual or temporal, will stand afar off, for fear of the torment of Babylon, and behold the smoke of her burn-

ing as that of Sodom, seen at a distance. The church of God may fall for a time, yet she shall rise again; but the fall of Babylon will be an utter overthrow.

They wept, and cast dust upon their heads. The pleasures of sin are but for a season, and will end in dismal sorrow: all who rejoice in the success of the enemies of the church, will share their downfall; and those who most indulge in pride and pleasure, are found least able to bear calamities; their sorrows will be excessive, as their pleasure and jollity were before. Godly sorrow is a support under affliction, but worldly sorrow adds to the calamity.

And let prosperous merchants and traders in great commercial cities, learn from these prophecies, with all their gains, to get understanding, to ensure the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to be faithful stewards in the unrighteous mammon; otherwise even in this life they may have cause to mourn, that riches make to themselves wings and fly away, and that all the fruits their souls lusted after, are departed from them. Death, at any rate, will soon end their commerce, and in one hour all the riches of the ungodly will come to nought, be exchanged, not only for the coffin and the worm; but for the fire that cannot be quenched.

12. It is plain, in general that this is designed to be a figurative, not a literal description of merchandise; therefore the figurative meanings may be applied to such literal meanings as will agree to the general and certain intention of them. It may be observed that Rome shall be deprived of all her wealth, which she procured by her management and intrigues. —Lowman

Ver. 20—24: There was joy and triumph, both in heaven and earth, at the irrecoverable fall of Babylon. While her own people bewailed her, the servants of God are called to rejoice over her, ver. 20. That which is matter of rejoicing to the servants of God on earth, is matter of rejoicing to the angels in heaven. The apostles, who are idolatrously honoured at Rome, and daily worshipped there, rejoice in her fall, as if it avenged them on her for the dishonour cast on their characters, while it vindicated the glory of God.

The fall of Babylon was an act of God's justice. God was then avenging his people's cause; they had committed their cause to him to whom vengeance

belongs, and now the year of recompence was come for the controversies of Zion ; and though they did not take pleasure in the miseries of any, yet they had reason to rejoice in the discoveries of the glorious justice of God. And because it was an irrecoverable ruin : this enemy should never molest them any more ; of this they were assured by a sign, ver. 21. An angel from heaven takes up a stone like a great mill-stone, and casts it into the sea, saying, Thus shall Babylon be thrown down with violence, and be found no more at all. The place should be no longer habitable by man, no work should be done there, no comfort enjoyed, no light seen there ; but utter darkness and desolation, as the reward of her great wickedness, in deceiving the nations with her sorceries, destroying and murdering those whom she could not deceive, ver. 24. Such abominable sins deserved so great a ruin. Her merchants being said to be the great men of the earth, in connexion with all nations who were deceived by her sorceries, plainly refers to the infamous spiritual traffic before mentioned. Let us take warning from those things which have brought others to destruction, and let us take occasion from the view given us of the changeable nature of earthly things, to set our affections on things above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God.

The denunciation of the judgment of Babylon, uttered by the angel, and continued in the heavenly voice, seems principally intended for the support and comfort of the poor persecuted christian church, during the height of the antichristian usurpation.—(601.)

21 See Jeremiah 51 63, 64.

23 Rome is still standing, and flourishing ; and is honoured by many nations, as the metropolis of the christian world. She still resounds with singers and musicians, she still excels in arts, which serve to pomp and luxury. She still abounds with candles and lamps, and torches, burning even by day, as well as by night ; consequently this prophecy remains yet to be fulfilled.—*Bishop Newton*. He considers that modern Rome is to be destroyed by fire, literally understood ; but *Woodhouse* says that fire in prophetic language is meant, which implies utter destruction. She is Babylon in a spiritual sense, and in a spiritual sense it is that she is to be burned and consumed—her corruption, superstition, and usurped dominion ; not her buildings. *Flaser* considers it is meant literally of destruction by fire, and says, " in connexion with the flames spread by a victorious enemy, shall be a subterraneous fire,

kindled by the breath of the Almighty." See also Isa. 34. 9, 10.

CHAP. XIX.

The church in heaven and on earth triumphs, and praises the Lord for his righteous judgments, ver. 1—8. An angel pronounces them blessed, and refuses the worship which John offered him, 9, 10. Then follows a vision of Christ, going forth to destroy the beast and his armies, 11—21.

Ver. 1—4. The fall of Babylon being fixed, finished, and declared irrecoverable, a holy triumph over her follows. The holy apostles and prophets, ch. 18. 20, now joyfully answer the call : here is the form of their thanksgiving, in that heavenly and most comprehensive word, Alleluia, praise ye the Lord. Their prayers are turned into praises, their hosannas end in halleluias. They praise God for the truth of his word, and the righteousness of his providence, especially in the ruin of Babylon, who had been a mother and a nurse, and a nest of idolatry, licentiousness, and cruelty : for which signal example of Divine justice, they ascribe salvation, and glory, and honour, and power unto God. When the angels and saints cried Alleluia, her fire burned more fiercely, and her smoke ascended for ever and ever. The surest way to have our deliverances continued and completed, is, to give God the glory for what he has done for us : praising God for what we have, is praying in the most effectual manner for what is yet further to be done for us. There is harmony between the angels and the saints in this triumphant song ; the churches and their ministers take the melodious sound from the angels, and repeat it ; falling down, and worshipping God, they cry, Amen, Alleluia.

Ver. 5—10. The triumphant song being ended, a marriage-song begins. The chorus was large and loud, as the voice of many waters, and of mighty thunderings. God is fearful in praises ; there is no discord in heaven. The occasion of this song is, the reign and dominion of that omnipotent God who has redeemed his church by his own blood, and now publicly betroths her to himself, ver. 7. The marriage of the Lamb is come. Christ is the Bridegroom of his ransomed church. This second

union will be fully completed in heaven ; but the beginning of the glorious millennium may be considered as the celebration of his espousals on earth. All hitherto done seems merely an introduction to that happy era, when innumerable multitudes will be converted all over the earth, and the state of the church will greatly resemble heaven itself. Then the church of Christ, being purified from heresies, divisions, and corruptions, in doctrine, discipline, worship, and practice, will be made ready and meet to be publicly owned by him as his delight and his beloved.

The bride appeared ; not in the gay, gaudy dress of the mother of harlots, but in fine linen, clean and white, which is the righteousness of saints ; in the robes of Christ's righteousness, imputed for justification, and imparted for sanctification ; the white robe of purity and holiness ; the righteousness of Christ imputed to them ; or the image of Christ renewed in them, by the sanctification of the Spirit, of which their righteous acts are effects and evidences. These, her nuptial ornaments, she did not purchase by any price of her own, but received them as the gift of her blessed Lord. The marriage-feast, though not particularly described, as Matt. 22. 4, is declared by an angel to be such as would make all happy who were called to it, so called as to accept the invitation, a feast made up of the promises of the gospel, the true sayings of God, ver. 9. These promises, opened, applied, and sealed by the Spirit of God, in holy ordinances, are the marriage-feast ; and the whole collective body of all who partake of this feast, constitute the bride, the Lamb's wife. They are not mere spectators or guests, but united in the espoused party, the mystical body of Christ. This seems especially to refer to the abundant grace and consolation Christians will receive in the happy days which are coming.

The apostle felt a transport of joy at this vision. He offered honour to the angel ; he fell at his feet, to worship him ; this was a part of external worship, it was a posture of proper adoration. The angel refused it ; See thou do it not ; thou art doing wrong. I, as an angel and messenger of God, have the testimony of Jesus, a charge to be a witness for him, and to testify concern-

ing him ; and thou, as an apostle, having the Spirit of prophecy, hast the same testimony to give in ; we are in this brethren and fellow-servants. He directs the apostle to the true and only object of religious worship ; worship God, and him alone. This plainly condemns the practice of those who worship the elements of bread and wine, and saints, and angels ; and of those who do not believe that Christ is truly and by nature God, yet pay him a sort of religious worship. They stand convicted of idolatry by a messenger from heaven. Let us be glad in Him, and honour Him ; and while we view the Lamb that was slain, uniting redeemed sinners to himself, let us remember we are invited to share the blessedness of the marriage supper, and that the wedding garment is given to all who seek for it—that now is the time to be made ready for the sacred happiness, and that all which the world can boast, is unworthy to be compared therewith. These are the true sayings of God ; of Him who is to be worshipped, as one with the Father and the Holy Spirit ; all revelation is the testimony of the Father, by the Spirit, to the Redeemer's glory and kingdom.

6. *Sinceon* says, this may be considered as an effusion of confident anticipation, which is the precise view wherein these words should be understood, for Rome is not yet destroyed, and the " Alleluia's " are uttered only in the prospect of that event. And we too, with a prospective regard to future events, may utter this song.

8 This fine linen is both pure and bright. Pure in regard of justification, because it presents us unblamable and unprovable before God, free from any spots or blot. Bright in respect of the glory which it brings a man, both before God, who makes us heirs of his eternal kingdom, because of this purity of his love, which is made ~~clear~~ ^{known} as also before men, to whom it shows forth our adoption, by those most goodly and glistering fruits thereof, which it makes to offer themselves readily to the view of men, by means of the Holy Ghost working together with us, and within us. And see how distinctly the Holy Ghost speaks in this place ; for he saith, not that the justifications of the saints are fine linen, but contrarily, that fine linen are the justifications, and that not of the wicked, as a man is, when he is first converted to God, but of the saints ; that is, all justifications, even of those in whom piety most shines forth, flow not from a man's self, and from inherent matters of his own, but abide in the outward garment that comes unto him from without, namely, in Christ and his righteousness, whom we put in us by faith alone. It is a plain and unanswerable place of scripture, to confirm the doctrine of justification by faith only. And because of the double proof and evidence of our justification, one before God by faith, in which respect Christ is the white linen

of the saints, another before men by the works of sanctification, therefore the Holy Ghost uses the word justifications in the plural, so to comprise in one word what was declared by two, pure and bright. For the works of holiness, if taken as they are severed from the righteousness of faith, are not pure; or if the righteousness of faith be considered apart from works of holiness, it is not bright or shining forth; for it is hidden within, far from the eyes of men. Neither of them, therefore, can be called justifications severally, but both of them are to be joined together to express the force of this word in the plural number.—*Brightman.*

10. This text supplies a principle of Divine authority, that Jesus, whose person, and character, and history, are known from the books of scripture, is the end and object of the prophetic; stem contained in those books.—*Hur-l.*

Ver. 11—21. Christ, the glorious Head of the church, is described as sitting on a white horse, the emblem of justice and holiness. He is faithful and true to his covenant and promise, he is righteous in all his proceedings, he has a penetrating insight into all the strength and stratagems of his enemies. He is wholly unlike those warriors, whose ambition, rapacity, or malignant passions, have in every age made the earth a field of blood. He has a large and extensive dominion, many crowns, for he is King of kings, and Lord of lords. He is arrayed in a vesture dipped in blood; his own blood, by which he purchased his mediatorial power; the blood of his enemies, over whom he always prevails. His name is the Word of God; a name that none fully knows but himself: only this we know, that this Word was God manifest in the flesh; but his perfections are incomprehensible by any creature. The army he commands is very large, made up of many armies; angels and saints follow and resemble him in their armour of purity and righteousness; chosen, and called, and faithful. A sharp sword proceeds from his mouth, with which he smites the nations. The threatenings of the written word which he is going to execute on his enemies, who are now put in the wine-press of the wrath of God, to be trodden under foot by him. The ensigns of his authority are his name, written on his vesture and thigh, King of kings, and Lord of lords; asserting his authority and power, warning the most powerful princes to submit, or they must fall before him.

An invitation is given to the angels of heaven, that they should come and view the battle, and share in the spoil. Inti-

imating that this great decisive engagement should leave the enemies of the church a feast for the birds of prey, and that all the world should have cause to rejoice in the issue of it. The angel standing in the sun, denotes that these judgments, would be conspicuous to all the world, (and betokens the light and knowledge which shall then beam upon mankind—101.) and the total ruin of antichrist in the east seems closely connected with his fall in the west. The battle is joined; the powers of earth and hell make their utmost effort, ver. 19. These verses declare important transactions, before intimated, and also foretold by the ancient prophets. The victory is gained by the great and glorious Head of the church; the leaders of the army, the beast and the false prophet, are taken. Those who led them by power, and by policy and falsehood, are cast into the burning lake, incapable of molesting the church of God any more; and their followers are given up to execution, and made a feast for the fowls of heaven. Though the Divine vengeance will chiefly fall upon the beast, and the false prophet, yet it will be no excuse to those who fight under their banner, that they only followed their leaders.

These persons were not excused because they followed their leaders, and did what they bade them. How vain will be the plea of many sinners at the great day. We followed our guides, we did as we saw others do before us! Let us remember that God has given us a rule to walk by, the infallible and inflexible rule of his word; and neither the example of the most, nor of the chief, must influence us to act contrary thereto, for if we do as the most do, we must go where the most go, even into the burning lake.—(73.)

18. This is strong figurative language, describing a terrible slaughter of the human race, the effects of a heavy judgment, when God shall come to take vengeance upon Babylon, and punish the enemies of his people. There is no necessity for supposing that Christ will marshal armies of his disciples, who will have literally to fight against those of the beast and the kings of the earth who support him; but while they are following Christ in spreading the everlasting gospel, he, as King of kings and Lord of lords, may work the complete overthrow of their adversaries, by placing them in collision with each other.—*W. Jones.*

—This passage foretells the complete destruction of the antichristian powers of Europe, and the confiscation of all the treasures and

possessions the antichristian princes have accumulated.—*Towers*. The destruction of the beast, and the false prophet, and all their obstinate adherents, and all they have.—*Dnabuz*.

CHAPTER XX.

Satan is bound for a thousand years, ver. 1-3. The first resurrection; they are blessed that have part therein, 4-6. Satan loosed. Gog and Magog, 7-10. The last and general resurrection, 11-15.

Ver. 1-3. The ceasing of all open opposition to the gospel, and the dreadful punishment of those who concurred in antichristian corruptions, has been described. But the great agent would produce fresh evils if not prevented. The apostle had a vision, figuratively representing the restraints which would be laid on Satan himself; and it is implied that Christ, with almighty power, and absolute authority, will restrain the devil from deceiving mankind as he has hitherto done. He makes use of means in this work; he has a chain, and a key; a great chain to bind Satan, and the key of the prison in which he was to be confined. Christ never wants proper powers and instruments to break the power of Satan. Neither the strength of the dragon, nor the subtlety of the serpent, can rescue him from Christ. He cast him into the bottomless pit; cast him down with force, and with just vengeance, to his own place and prison, from whence he had been permitted to break out, and disturb the churches, and deceive the nations. Christ shuts, and none can open; he shuts by his power, seals by his authority. The term of this confinement of Satan is a thousand years; after which, he was to be loosed again for a little season. The church should have a considerable time of peace and prosperity, but all her trials were not yet over.

Ver. 4-6. Here is an account of the reign of the saints, for the same space of time which Satan continued bound. Those who suffered for Christ, and all who faithfully adhered to him, not receiving the mark of the beast, nor worshipping his image. They were raised from the dead, and restored to life. Their liberties and privileges were revived and restored. They were possessed of great honour and authority,

rather of a spiritual than of a secular nature. They reigned with Christ a thousand years. Those who suffer with Christ, shall reign with Christ; they shall reign with him in his spiritual and heavenly kingdom, in glorious conformity to him in his wisdom, righteousness, and holiness, beyond what had been known before in the world; this is called the first resurrection, with which none but those who serve Christ, and suffer for him, shall be favoured. As for the wicked, they shall not be restored to their power again, till Satan is let loose; this may be called a resurrection, as the conversion of the jews is said to be life from the dead. The happiness of these servants of God is declared. None can be blessed, but they that are holy: and all that are holy shall be blessed. These were holy as a sort of first-fruits to God, in this spiritual resurrection, and as such blessed by him. They are secured from the power of the second death. We know something of what the first death is, and it is very awful; but we know not what this second death is; it must be much more dreadful; it is the death of the soul, eternal separation from God. May we never know what it is by experience; those who have experienced a spiritual resurrection, are saved from the power of the second death.

We may expect that a thousand years will follow the final destruction of the antichristian, idolatrous, persecuting powers, during which pure christianity, in doctrine, worship, and holiness, will be diffused over all the earth; and all idolatry, infidelity, cruelty, and all other evils, which now harass and desolate the earth, will be restrained by the almighty operation of the Holy Spirit; and godliness, righteousness, peace, and purity, will render the earth in some measure like heaven itself. Hitherto the depravity of human nature, and the malignant agency of apostate angels, have been shown in the state of the world. Nothing but the power of God can prevent men from listening to the temptations of apostate angels, or from opposing, despising, or perverting the gospel itself. But at length the Lord will arise; by his mighty power he will destroy the wicked, and confine fallen angels. And by the powerful working of the Holy Spirit of God, the image of God in man will be new created; and obedience, faith, and holiness, will

as certainly prevail as unbelief, impenitence, and unholiness, now do. That measure of righteousness which the universal prevalence of true christianity must produce, will immensely lessen the quantity even of natural evils. We may easily perceive what a variety of dreadful pains, diseases, and other calamities must cease, if all men were true and consistent christians. All the evils of public and private contention will be ended, and happiness of every kind largely increased. Every man will then try to alleviate suffering instead of adding to the sorrows around him; nor shall they hurt or destroy in all the holy mountain of God. The wild notions and extravagant practices grafted on the belief of a millennium, long caused even the name of it to be objected to by many, yet we have as just grounds to expect such a happy event, as the jews had to look for a Messiah; but those who suppose it will be a carnal millennium, are as much mistaken as the jews were in looking for a temporal deliverer. It is our duty to pray for the promised glorious days, and to do every thing in our public and private stations, which can be instrumental in preparing the way for them; even as David made abundant provision for the temple Solomon was to build. Whether the general opinion that this thousand years will be the seventh thousand from the creation, or the sabbatical millenary, the event must determine, but the dawn of this glorious day cannot be very distant. And we ought to advert to those things which may prepare the way for it, in the application and improvement of our time and our several talents.

4. "Whosoever worshipped not"—*Scholefield*.

Ver. 7—10. The restraints laid for a time upon Satan are taken off, for reasons we are not competent to understand; thus the spirit of antichrist will rise again after the thousand years are expired. While this world lasts, Satan's power in it will not be wholly destroyed, though it may be limited and lessened. No sooner is Satan let loose, than he again begins deceiving the nations, and stirring them up to make war with the saints and servants of God. It would be well if the servants of Christ were as active severing in doing good, as his

in doing mischief. They are deceived as to the cause they engage in; they believe it to be good, when it is indeed very bad: and they are deceived in the issue; they expect to be successful, but are sure to lose the day. Satan's last efforts seem to be the greatest. He raises a mighty army, from all the four quarters of the earth, ver. 8. We need not be inquisitive as to what particular powers are meant by Gog and Magog, since the army was gathered from all parts of the world.

This formidable army, ver. 9, compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city, the spiritual Jerusalem, in which the most precious interests of the people of God are lodged, therefore to them a beloved city. The army of the saints is drawn forth out of the city, to defend it; but the army of the enemy is so much superior to that of the church, that they compassed them and their city about. Fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured the enemy. God, in an extraordinary and more immediate manner, fights this last and decisive battle for his people, that the victory may be complete, and the glory be to himself. The great enemy, the devil, is cast into hell, with the beast and the false prophet, tyranny and idolatry, to be tormented, night and day, for ever and ever.

10. This description is conformable to other ancient prophecies, still unfulfilled, or which have received only a partial or typical completion. Such are Isa. 63. 66; Joel 3, Ezek. 38, 39; of them little can be conjectured with safety. They are to be handed down to the church of the latter days, even as the prophecies we see fulfilled have been delivered to us, and with this consolation, that this overflowing of iniquity shall be miraculously and completely terminated. And it is the last successful effort of Satan against the church. He is then consigned to his eternal prison,—*Foodhouse*.

Ver. 11—15. After the events just foretold, the end will speedily come; and there are no intimations of any thing that shall intervene before the appearing of Christ to judge the world. This will be the great day, when all shall appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, the great white throne, and tribunal of judgment, very glorious, and perfectly just and righteous. The throne of iniquity, that establishes wickedness by a law, no fellowship with this righteous one and tribunal. The Judge, the

Lord Jesus Christ, will then put on such majesty and terror, that there will be a dissolution of the whole frame of nature, 2 Pet. 3. 10. The persons to be judged, are the dead, small and great; both young and old, low and high, poor and rich. None are so mean but they have some talents to account for; and none so great as to avoid having to account for them. Not only those who are alive at the coming of Christ, but all who have died before; the whole multitude who lived upon earth through all generations. The grave shall surrender the bodies of men, hell shall surrender the souls of the wicked, the sea shall surrender the many who seem to have been lost in it. The books were opened. The book of God's omniscience, who is greater than our consciences, and knows all things. There is a book of remembrance with him both for good and bad; and the book of the sinner's conscience, which, though formerly secret, will now be opened. Every man will have recollection and consciousness of all his past actions, though he had long forgotten many of them, till thus brought to light and remembrance.

And another book shall be opened—the book of the scriptures, the rule of life; this book is opened, as containing the law, the touchstone by which the hearts and lives of men are to be tried; this book determines matter of right, the other books give evidence of matters of fact. It is emblematical of the Lord's knowledge of his people, and his declaration of their repentance, faith, and good works; evidencing their election, redemption, regeneration, and interest in his righteousness, and the blessings of the new covenant. By their works men shall be justified, or condemned; for though God knows their state and their principles, yet, being to approve himself to angels and men as a righteous God, he will try their principles by their practices, and so will be justified when he speaks, and clear when he judges. All who have made a covenant with death, and an agreement with hell, shall be condemned with their infernal confederates, cast with them into the lake of fire, not being entitled to eternal life, according to the rules of life laid down in the scripture. But those whose names are written in that book, who are justified and acquitted by

gospel, shall then be justified and acquitted by the Judge, and shall enter into eternal life, having nothing more to fear from death, or hell, or wicked men; for these are all destroyed together. This is the second death; it is the first separation of sinners from God, without any hope of being restored to his favour, or of deliverance from his wrath. Let it be our great concern to see on what terms we stand, whether our Bibles justify us or condemn us now; for the Judge of all will proceed by that rule; Christ shall judge the secrets of all men according to the gospel. Happy are they who have ordered and stated their cause according to the gospel, so as to know that they shall be justified in the great day of the Lord! May we firmly believe that Christ shall come to be our Judge, and daily prepare to stand before his tribunal.

Let those who have no reverence for God's majesty, who have no esteem for his gospel, who have never taken this awful alarm, who have never fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before them, tremble at these awakening views. Let them all, of every condition, say in their hearts, Who shall dwell with devouring flames, and lie down in everlasting burnings? even in this lake of fire, into which every one who is not found written in the book of life shall be cast, and where the wretched victims of Divine justice shall be tormented for ever and ever. — (80)

ON THE MILLENNIUM.

2—5. Much has been written on the promised millennium, or reign of the saints, but the meaning of a prophecy of this kind can only be made clearly manifest by the event. It is unsafe to conjecture after what method it shall be fulfilled; whether, as some prophecies, literally, or as others, typically; whether the departed saints and martyrs shall actually be raised again in their own persons, to effect so glorious a change in religion and morals, or whether, like Elijah, in the person of John Baptist, and David, in that of Christ, they shall live again in the persons of other saints, who shall fulfil their characters and offices, no man may presume to determine. It is best to wait for the completion of the prediction. Yet we may confidently indulge a well-grounded expectation, that happy times of long duration are yet destined for the Christian church, even here upon earth, and at no very great distance. — *Woodhouse*.

T. "as seats of dignity, are to distinguish have the administration of government to them, from the rest, and cautiously be applied to every member of a . . . Some interpreters understand liter-

ally, what is said of the souls of those who were belated for the witness of Jesus. As *Burnet* represents it,—Those who have suffered for the sake of Christ, and a good conscience, shall be raised from the dead a thousand years before the general resurrection, and reign with Christ in a happy state. Others understand this description in a figurative sense, as must be done with respect to the description, ver. 1—3. They suppose the prophecy intends such persons as have the true spirit and temper of martyrs, who have like faith, constancy, and zeal, whom no persecutions could prevail upon to deny the truth, make shipwreck of a good conscience, or criminally comply with any of the corruptions of the times. Those who are for the literal resurrection of the martyrs, principally insist on the direct meaning of the expressions, and some apply it to the martyrs under the heathen emperors, as belated was a roman punishment. They assert it is agreeable to the doctrine of St Paul, 1 Thess 4. 16, that the dead in Christ shall rise first. But writers who understand this description in a figurative sense, observe, that all the expressions will very well bear such an interpretation; that it is more agreeable to the style of this book; that all these expressions are used in the ancient prophets in a figurative meaning; and that there are unanswerable difficulties attending a literal interpretation.—From *Lowman*. He remarks with *Whitby*, that a literal resurrection is never in the New Testament expressed or represented to us by the living of the soul, but by the living, raising, resurrection of the dead, the raising the bodies of the saints, of them that slept in the dust or in their graves. Thus, the church in peace, free from persecution, and all deceitful arts of Satan and wicked men, enlarged with the conversion of the jews, and the fulness of the gentiles, serving God as a kingdom of priests, in the purity of christian worship, and enjoying all the blessings of Divine protection and grace, may well be expressed as living and reigning with Christ. *Lowman* also considers that the whole scheme of this prophecy is so far from being an encouragement to enthusiasm, that it is a wise preservative against it, for the general doctrine of the whole book is this—That the patience of the saints is their way to victory.

Whitby contends against that interpretation of the millennium, which supposes the literal resurrection of the saints and martyrs, to reign on earth a thousand years. He urges that this opinion never was generally received in the church of Christ, and exposes the gross and even sensual ideas upon the subject, held by some who are ranked among the fathers; and his view is thus expressed—"I believe, that after the fall of antichrist, there shall be such a glorious state of the church by the conversion of the jews to the christian faith, as shall be to it life from the dead. That it shall then flourish in peace and plenty, in righteousness and holiness, and in a pious offspring; that then shall begin a glorious and undisturbed reign of Christ, over both jew and gentile, to continue a thousand years, during the time of Satan's binding. That as John the Baptist was Elias, because he was in the spirit and power of Elias; so shall the church of martyrs, and of those who received the mark of the beast, be entirely freed from all the doctrines of the antichristian church, and the spirit and purity of the times of

tive martyrs shall return." *Whitby* notices the interpretations of several passages of scripture by the advocates for a literal resurrection, and argues against such a view, from its inconsistency with the happy state of souls departed; from the descriptions of the resurrection in scripture, and the qualities of the bodies when raised; and from its inconsistency with the christian faith, and the nature of the gospel promises. *Vint* says that a jewish tradition seems the only foundation on which rests the interpretation in favour of the personal reign of Christ.

Bishop Newton, who in many respects follows *Mede*, says, that nothing is more evident than that this prophecy of the millennium, and of the first resurrection, has not yet been fulfilled, even though the resurrection be taken in a figurative sense; yet that we should be cautious and tender of making the first resurrection an allegory, lest others reduce the second into an allegory too. That there shall be such a happy period as the millennium—that the kingdom of heaven shall be established upon earth, is the plain and express doctrine of Daniel and all the prophets, as well as St. John; but he is the only one who has declared particularly and in express terms, that the martyrs shall rise to partake the felicities of this kingdom, and that it shall continue upon earth a thousand years; and the jewish church before him, and the christian church after him, have further believed and taught, that these thousand years will be the seventh millenary of the world. This doctrine, he says, was generally believed in the three first and purest ages; but afterwards grew into disrepute, having been debased with a mixture of fables. It has suffered by the misrepresentation of its enemies as well as by the indiscretion of its friends. It has been made an engine of faction; and turbulent fanatics, under the pretence of being saints, have aspired to dominion, and threatened the peace of civil society. The church of Rome has endeavoured by all means to discredit this doctrine, the kingdom of Christ being founded on the ruins of the kingdom of antichrist. It sprang up again at the reformation, and there is danger both of pruning and lopping it too short, and of suffering it to grow too wild and luxuriant. Great caution, soberness, and judgment, are required to keep the middle course. It is safest and best, faithfully to adhere to the words of scripture, or to fair deductions from scripture; and to rest contented with the general account, till time shall accomplish and cast light upon all the particulars. It is not our business to frame theories and invent hypotheses, but faithfully to follow the word of God, as our surest guide, without regarding much the authority of men. See *Newton* on the prophecies.

These views may thus be stated in the words of *W. Jones*. "On this interesting subject much has been written by persons of learning, ingenuity, and talent; the question which divides them is—Will the reign of Christ, during the thousand years here promised, be spiritual or personal? Are we to understand these verses in a literal or figurative sense? As the language of the prophecy? Is the resurrection of the dead to be interpreted literally of the body from the grave? Will Christ descend in person from his throne in heaven again upon this our earth during the millennium? And shall all his people be raised

from their graves at the commencement of the millennial period, and in their risen and glorified bodies inherit the earth? Some understand the words literally, while others, who consider the language to be prophetic and figurative, give a corresponding interpretation of it, considering the millennium to denote a time when the everlasting gospel shall be universally preached, and the blessings of it participated, both by jews and gentiles, in a far more abundant and general way than at any former period—when the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth; in short, when the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High, Dan. 7. 27. So opposite are the views of this subject, that difficulties attach to each, it were vain to disguise, and useless to deny; but what else can be expected on a subject of unfulfilled prophecy? Let us keep in mind, that it relates to events yet future, that it does not constitute an article of the faith once delivered to the saints, though it certainly is one of no inconsiderable importance in reference to our duty in using means to extend the Redeemer's kingdom in the earth."

The preceding extracts will sufficiently convey to the reader some idea of the nature of the statements which have been made as to the subject of the millennium, without attempting to enter more fully into the modern controversies on the subject. It may, however, be well to state summarily what are the opinions held by those who advocate both views of the question, only observing, that among these advocates, few, or none, hold the opinions of either part in their full extent, or without some modifications to a greater or less degree. 1. One view is, that the millennium is to succeed the renewal of the earth by fire, and the second advent of our Lord in glory, who is to reign on this new earth with the risen and glorified saints, for at least a thousand years, after having taken vengeance on all his enemies then alive, who will not be raised from the dead till the thousand years expire, to receive their final sentence; that this second advent of Christ in glory, may be looked for very soon; and events are now happening which entitle the believer to lift up his head and look up, believing that his redemption draweth nigh; that the conversion of the jews is not to take place till this millennial period begin, nor any universal state of christianity to exist before, that Christ's servants are then to serve him and see his face, and to be the ministers of his further purposes to this earth. 2. The opposite view is—That the second advent of Christ in his glory will not be till the end of the earth's history, that the millennium will precede his coming, and that there is to be an apostasy after it has run its appointed course; that the millennium will not begin for two hundred years to come, at least, and consequently the second advent of Christ, instead of being expected within a few years, is not to be expected for some hundred years; that during the millennium, there will be a universal state of christianity; that it is not meant to affirm, that every individual believes, but merely, that every nation of the whole world will receive, and, generally, obey the gospel, to the extent of which will cease, and a happier order prevail. Both are agreed, then, as to the

a millennium; but differ wholly as to time, and as to its nature. There is, however, another opinion, which must not be passed without notice. This would assume that the millennium is past, or passing away. *Gypsies* among those who take this view in recent times. By carrying the spiritualizing interpretation to the extreme, and considering the first resurrection as fulfilled in the wilderness, it, in effect, places much of the thousand years in a period when popish darkness overspread the face of the earth, and during several hundred years of which the profession of the truth, as it is in Jesus, was only to be found in a few harassed and persecuted individuals; thus it represents the dragon as chained in the pit, while popery and mohammedanism reigned supreme over the eastern and western roman world. This conclusion which "represents the apocalyptic millennium, which has always been considered as but another name for the golden age of the church, as actually synchronizing with the most calamitous period of her annals, will, no doubt, do violence to the most cherished sentiments of the reader respecting this distinguished era." Such is the admission of *Hush*, who advocates this view, adding, however, that he knows not how to avoid the above stated conclusion; and the reader will probably not be much inclined to admit premises which necessarily lead to such a result. Between such a statement and that of *Champlin* and others, who expect our Lord speedily to appear in his glorified body, personally to fill the throne of David, and reign over his saints on earth, the view of *Faber*, looking for a large effusion of the Spirit, to establish the spiritual dominion of Christ, may be considered as pointing out a middle course. The declaration of our Lord himself that his kingdom is not of this world, and that it comes not with observation, John 18. 36; Luke 17. 20, also militates strongly against the idea of Christ's assuming the character of an earthly monarch.

Hardlaw remarks, that if the words occurred in an historical or epistolary composition, to explain them symbolically would justly be pronounced unnatural, unless specially warned of a purposed deviation. In a professedly symbolical book, there is the same force of objection against them being interpreted literally. The whole of this very vision is symbolical, the dragon, the binding with a chain, and the sealing. Why, then, are we immediately to make a transition from the symbolical to the literal, from the style of prophecy to the style of history? The vision of the souls of them that had been martyred, he considers, strongly supports the figurative or spiritual interpretation; that it signifies a glorious revival and extensive prevalence of the spirit and character of those who had laid down their lives for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus. In reference to the literal interpretation, *Hardlaw* further remarks, that the description limits to a particular class or description of the martyrs, "at the words, 'that the rest of the dead, do not again till the thousand years end,'" signifies the re-appearance of the character of the hostile opponents of his cause, (at the end of that period) also objects to the literal view as an "a part of the final judgment description subsequently taking place on all the earth," urges, that the uncertainty of death

is the same to us as 'the uncertainty of the sounding of the trumpet of God, and that preparation for death and preparation for judgment are one and the same thing; that he who is not ready for the coming of the Son of God, and for taking his station before the dead tribunal, is not ready to die, and, on the contrary, that he who is ready to die, is equally ready for the Lord's appearing.

Jones and Paks both, have made good observations on the happy state to which the world may attain on the prevalence of true religion. Even the cessation of war, and oppression, and misrule, with their attendant miseries, would have limited influence, in comparison with the wide diffusion of happiness which would ensue, from the improvements in private life, from the banishment of vice, ambition, and idleness; litigation and crime ceasing, and kindness and brotherly-love prevailing.

This note cannot be closed more appropriately than in the words of *Bishop Hall*—"O, blessed Saviour, what strange variety of conceits do I find concerning thy thousand years' reign! What riddles are there in that prophecy which no human tongue can read! Where to fix the beginning of that marvellous millenary, and where the end, and what manner of reign it shall be—whether temporal or spiritual, on earth or in heaven, undergoes as many constructions as there are pens that have undertaken it, and yet when all is done, I see thine apostle speaks only of the souls of the martyrs reigning so long with thee, not of thy reigning so long on earth with those martyrs. How busy are the tongues of men—how are then brains taken up with the indeterminate construction of this enigmatical truth, when, in the mean time, the care of thy spiritual reign in their hearts is neglected! O, my Saviour, while others weary themselves with the disquisition of thy personal reign here upon earth for a thousand years, let it be the whole bent and study of my soul to make sure of my personal reign with thee in heaven to all eternity."

12 Here is evidently an allusion to the proceedings of human courts of judicature, as in Dan 7 9, 10. To illustrate this striking imagery, remark—1 The book of God's remembrance will be opened, Mal. 3 16. An exact register of every man's state before God. Here are recorded all his thoughts, words, and actions. A most awful book to all who die in their sins. 2 The book of conscience—an exact counterpart of the former. 3 The book of the law. The law of nature will be the canon for those who have had no other; the law of revelation for those to whom it has been manifested. But by the law can no flesh be justified. 4 The book of the gospel. While this will be an awfully tremendous record against all who have died in impenitence and unbelief, it will be a blessed book to every true believer in Christ Jesus. 5 The book of life. In this book will be found recorded the names of all that will actually be saved, and brought into possession of eternal glory and happiness, chosen of the Father, the redeemed, and the sanctified of the Holy Spirit. This book shows the perfect knowledge of the all-wise God has of all those on whom he bestows eternal life, and whom he registers as members of the general church or the first born, which

in heaven.—*Gawtlett*. The same ideas are partly expressed by *Gill*.

CHAPTER XXI.

A new heaven, and new earth, and the new Jerusalem, where God dwells, banishes all sorrow from his people, and makes them completely happy, ver. 1—8. It is figuratively described in its heavenly original, lustre and glory, secure defence, and bright ornaments, 9—14; and in its beautiful structure, 15—21. In its perfect happiness, as enlightened with the immediate presence of God and the Lamb, 22, 23. And in the free access of vast multitudes, of all nations and degrees, made perfectly holy, 24—27.

Ver. 1—8. Here is an account of the happiness of the church of God in the future state. The new heaven and the new earth will not then be distinct; the very earth of the saints, their glorified bodies, will be spiritual and heavenly, and suited to those pure and bright mansions. To make way for the commencement of this new world, the old world, with all its troubles and commotions, passed away. There will be no sea; which aptly represents entire freedom from conflicting passions, temptations, troubles, changes, and alarms, and from whatever can divide or interrupt the communion of saints. There remaineth a rest for the people of God.

In this new world the apostle saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from heaven, not as to its place, but as to its origin. This new Jerusalem is the church of God in its new and perfect state, beautified with all perfection of wisdom and holiness, meet for the full enjoyment of the Lord Jesus Christ in glory—the church triumphant. Its blessedness came wholly from God, and depended on him.

The presence of God with his people in heaven will not be interrupted as it is on earth, but he will dwell with them continually. They shall be his people; their souls shall be assimilated to him, filled with all the love, honour, and delight in God their relation requires.

They shall be their perfect holiness, and shall be their God. God himself will be with them, his immediate presence with them, his love fully manifested to them, his glory upon them, will be their happiness. All effects of former sin shall be done away. They have been in tears, by reason of sin, of

affliction, of the calamities of the church; but no signs, no remembrance of former sorrows shall remain. Tears may now furrow our cheeks, and anguish may now distract our hearts, because of sin within us and around us, and because of its distressing effects. God himself, as their tender Father, with his kind hand, shall wipe away the tears of his children. All the causes of future sorrow shall be for ever removed; there shall be neither death, nor pain; therefore, no sorrow, nor crying: these are things incident to the state in which they were before; but all former things are passed away.

This vision is of such importance to the church and people of God, that they need the fullest assurances; God, from heaven repeats and ratifies the truth thereof. Many ages must pass between the time when this vision was given forth, and its accomplishment, and many great trials must intervene; therefore, God would have it committed to writing, for perpetual memory, and continual use to his people. Christ makes all things new. If we are willing and desirous that the gracious Redeemer should make all things new in our hearts and nature, we need not fear but that he will make all things new in respect of our situation, till he has brought us to enjoy complete happiness. The certainty of the promise is averred; these words are faithful and true; and it follows, It is done, it is as sure as if it were done already. God gives his titles as a pledge for the full performance, Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End. Men may begin designs they never can bring to perfection; but the counsel of God shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure. They thirst after a state of sinless perfection, and the uninterrupted enjoyment of God; and it would be inconsistent with the goodness of God, and his love to his people, to create in them holy and heavenly desires, and then deny them satisfaction. The greatness of this future happiness; it is the free gift of God; he gives of the water of life freely; this will not make years, but more grateful to his people; usual and sinful pleasures are not to be a poisoned waters; the best efforts, are like the scanty supply; term; when idolized, they become cisterns, and yield only vexation. the joys which Christ imparts,

waters springing from a fountain—pure, refreshing, abundant, and eternal. The sanctifying consolations of the Holy Spirit are preparations for heavenly happiness, the streams which flow for us in the wilderness. Christ gives of them freely, and when death comes, he will give full draughts of holy and glorious joys from the fountain head. The people of God enjoy this blessedness, by right of inheritance, as the sons of God; a title the most honourable, as resulting from so near and endeared a relation to God himself, and the most sure, as being the heirs of all things in him. Among the sins of those who perish, cowardliness and unbelief are first mentioned. The fearful durst not encounter the difficulties of religion, their slavish fear proceeded from their unbelief; but those who were so dastardly as not to dare to take up the cross of Christ, were yet so desperate as to run into abominable wickedness—murder, adultery, sorcery, idolatry, and lying—all liars, all who lie for gain or from malice, who thus cheat or slander others, hypocrites, false teachers, and deceivers. The agonies and terrors of the first death will consign them to the far greater terrors and agonies of eternal death; to die, and to be always dying. This misery they have justly deserved, they have in effect chosen, and prepared themselves for it by their sins. If the Lord should speak in thunder from heaven, declaring to sinners by name, that they were in the way to hell, it could not be more manifest than it is at present; for while any live in the sins here enumerated, God expressly says to each of them, "Except ye repent, ye shall likewise perish." But, blessed be his name, he says also to the vilest, "Repent, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out;" "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved."

2. *Simeon* notices that some consider this vision to describe the millennial age, while others interpret it as relating to heaven itself, which the order of prophecy seems to require, and some of the expressions determine the sense as relating not to this world, but to the next. While we suppose the state of the glory, to be primarily intended, we apprehend that glory is considered as begun on earth, and completed in heaven. It is necessary to advert to the opinion that the New Jerusalem is to be a city which will be brought down from heaven, and placed on the earth in the land of a residence for the saints to be raised

from the dead, at the commencement of the millennium! See *Begg* and others. *Doddridge* long since well expressed his wonder that any should embrace so wild and romantic a thought.

8 There is then a fearfulness which alone is sufficient to cause our condemnation, as well as the other crimes here mentioned. It is not only that fear which causes us to deny and to abandon the faith; but that also which causes us to be wanting to important and essential duties, through fear of hurting our fortunes, our ease, and even our temporal and spiritual interests, and of creating ourselves enemies. True courage is, to fear nothing but God and displeasing him. Real cowardice is, not to have courage to overcome ourselves, nor to renounce the love of the creature, through the hope of enjoying the Creator.—*Quænel*.

Ver. 9—21. God has variety of work and employment for his holy angels. Sometimes they are to sound the trumpet of Divine Providence, and warn a careless world; sometimes they are to pour out the vials of God's anger upon impenitent sinners, and sometimes to discover things of a heavenly nature to the heirs of salvation. They readily execute every commission from God; and when this world shall be at an end, the angels shall be employed by the great God to all eternity. The apostle had a glorious view and prospect from a high mountain. They who would have clear views of heaven, must get as near to heaven as they can, into the mount of meditation and faith. The subject-matter of the vision is, the bride, the Lamb's wife, the church of God in her glorious, perfect, triumphant state, under the resemblance of Jerusalem, having the glory of God shining in its lustre—glorious in her relation to Christ, in his image now perfected in her, and in his favour shining upon her, which shows that the happiness of heaven consists in immediate communications with God, and conformity to him.

The church triumphant is described under the emblem of a city, in riches and splendour beyond all the cities of this world. This change of emblems from a bride to a city, shows that we are only to take general ideas from this description, not to enter into particulars. The outward parts of the city, the wall, and the gates. The wall is the city. Heaven is a safe state; are there, are separated and from all evils and enemies. has a wall that is impregnable and precious. The form of it was. In the new Jerusalem all shall

in purity and perfection; this indeed is wanted and wished for on earth, but is only to be expected in heaven. The wall is six thousand miles in the whole compass: here is room for all the people of God; many mansions in their Father's house. The foundation of the wall; the promise and power of God, and the purchase of Christ, are the strong foundations of the safety and happiness of the church. The foundations are twelve; the twelve apostles published the gospel doctrines, which are the foundations upon which the church is built, Christ himself being the chief Corner-stone. These foundations were various and precious, set forth by twelve sorts of precious stones, denoting the variety and excellency of the doctrines of the gospel, or of the graces of the Holy Spirit, or the personal excellences of the Lord Jesus Christ. And that all earthly splendour is mean and contemptible compared with that of heaven, where all possible excellence and glory will abound for ever.

Heaven is not inaccessible; there is a free admission to all that are sanctified; they shall not find themselves shut out. There are twelve gates, answering to the twelve tribes of Israel. All the true Israel of God shall have entrance into the new Jerusalem, as every tribe had into the earthly Jerusalem. Guards are placed about them, twelve angels. The inscription on the gates are the names of the twelve tribes; to show they are to enter the gates into the city. As the city had four equal sides, so in each side there were three gates; from all quarters of the earth some shall get to heaven, and there is as free entrance from one part of the world as from the other; men of all nations, and languages, who believe on Christ, have by him access to God in grace here, and in glory hereafter. These gates were all of pearls. Christ is the Pearl of great price, and he is our Way to God. The street of the city was pure like transparent glass. The saints even tread upon gold. The new Jerusalem has its several streets. There is no exact order in heaven. It is not a state of rest, yet it is not a state of inactivity, for it is a state of continual motion; they walk with white; they have communion,

not only with God, but with one another; and all their steps are firm and clean. There is nothing magnificent enough in this world fully to set forth the glory of heaven. Could we, by a strong imagination, contemplate such a city as is here described, even as to the exterior part of it, such a wall, and such gates, how amazing, how glorious, would the prospect be! Yet this is but a faint, dim, and wholly inadequate representation of what heaven is in itself.

11-21. Here follows a very magnificent description of the new city, conformably to the prophecy of Isaiah 64. 11, 12. These seem to be general images to express beauty, magnificence, purity, strength, and solidity, agreeably to the ideas of eastern nations; and never to have been intended to be strictly scrutinized, or minutely and particularly explained, as if each had some moral and precise meaning.—*Lowth.* Nothing more seems to be intended than to afford some general, but lofty and sublime notion of the splendour of this superb and heavenly mansion, which the apostle Paul, 1 Cor. 2. 9, represents to be beyond conception.—*Woodhouse.* The height of the wall is stated, ver. 17. Writers observe that this cubical solid figure denotes the firmness of the church, and its immovable stability in all points.—*F. Roberts.* Some commentators endeavour to accommodate the qualities of each of the foundation stones to the character of one of the apostles.

Ver. 22-27. The temple of the new Jerusalem, was not a temple made with men's hands, but altogether spiritual and divine; for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb, are the temple thereof. There the saints are above the need of ordinances, which were means of their preparation for heaven. When the end is attained, the means are no longer useful. Perfect and immediate communion with God, will more than supply the place of gospel institutions. And what words can more fully express the union and co-equality of the Son with the Father, in the Godhead? Light is sweet, and it is a pleasant thing to behold the sun. What a dismal world would this be, if it were not for the light of the sun! What is there in heaven, that supplies its place? There is no want of the light of the sun; for the glory of God lightens that city, the Lamb is the Light thereof. Christ will be an everlasting of knowledge and joy to heaven; and if so, there is the sun or moon, any more need to set up lights at noon. The sun shines in its strength.

God will have some of all ranks and degrees of men, to fill the heavenly mansions; and the greatest earthly honour and glory is swallowed up by this heavenly glory that so much excels. The gates shall never be shut. There is no night, therefore no need of shutting the gates; all is at peace and secure. Some are coming in every hour and moment; and those that are sanctified, always find the gates open; they have an abundant entrance into the kingdom. The whole is intended to raise our expectations, and enlarge our views of heaven. And in proportion to our spirituality we shall be more and more led to contemplate heaven as filled with the glory of God, and enlightened by the presence of the Lord Jesus, the Sun of Righteousness, and the Redeemer of lost sinners, knowing that in his presence is fulness of joy, and at his right hand pleasures for evermore. Whatever is excellent and valuable in this world, shall be there enjoyed in a more refined kind, and to a far greater degree; a better and more enduring substance, more sweet and satisfying pleasures, a more glorious temper of mind, and a form and a countenance more glorious than ever known in this world. And as believers are the excellent of the earth, and enter there from every nation, so it may literally be said that they bring the glory and honour of the nations into it, as well as figuratively, in respect of its incomparable splendour and excellency.

Nothing sinful or unclean, idolatrous, or false and deceitful, can find admission. All the inhabitants are perfected in holiness. There the saints shall have no impure thing remain in them. In death they shall be cleansed from every thing of a defiling nature. Now they feel a sad mixture of corruption with their graces, which hinders them in the service of God, interrupts their communion with him, and intercepts the light of his countenance; but, at their entrance into the holy of holies, they are washed in the laver of Christ's blood, and presented to the Father without spot. There the saints shall have all persons admitted among them, as in the earthly Jerusalem there is mixed communion: after all that can be taken, some roots of bitterness will spring up to trouble

and defile christian societies. None are admitted into heaven, who work abominations; no abominations can have place in heaven. Also it is free from hypocrites, such as make lies. These will creep into the churches of Christ on earth, and may be concealed there, perhaps, all their days; but they cannot intrude into the new Jerusalem, which is wholly reserved for those who are called, and chosen, and faithful; who are all written, not only in the register of the visible church, but in the Lamb's book of life. As nothing unclean can enter heaven, let us be stirred up by these glimpses of heavenly things, to use all diligence to cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God, that we may be approved as israelites indeed, in whom there is no guile, and have sure evidence, that we are written in the book of life of the Lamb that was slain from the foundation of the world.

Glorious things are spoken of thee, O thou city of God. Thus does the Divine Being condescend to aid our feeble faith, by such representations. But the pearls, the gems, and the gold, the honours of kings, all fall inconceivably short of that glory; for eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man to conceive what God has prepared for them that love him. And who shall abide in this thy tabernacle? They whom God has from the beginning chosen to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth, being predestinated to the adoption of children, through Jesus Christ, unto himself. And who are these? the pure and pious, the humble and the holy. Form us, O Lord, to this character by thy grace, and let not any sensual enjoyments or worldly possessions turn our eyes from this glorious sight, or alienate our hearts from the pursuit of this blessedness. And lead us onward through what dark and gloomy path thou pleasest, to these abodes of light and glory, determined for us in what cottages we are, though ever so mean and old, where we are pursuing our journey to that royal, this imperial palace.

CHAPTER XXII.

The description of the heaven carried on under the figures of

and tree of life, and of the throne of God and the Lamb, ver. 1-5. The truth and certain accomplishment of all the prophetic visions are confirmed, 6-16. The Spirit and the bride say, Come; and the apostle closes with the usual benediction, 17-21.

Ver. 1-5. The pure river denotes the holy nature and effects of the pleasures which flow without interruption or end, for the full satisfaction of the saints in glory. It is described by its fountain-head—the throne of God and the Lamb. All our springs of grace, comfort, and glory, are in God; and all our streams from him, through the stonement and mediation of the Lamb. By its quality—pure, and clear as crystal. All streams of earthly comfort are muddy; but these are clear, salutary, and refreshing. It gives life, and preserves life, to those who drink of it, and thus it will flow for evermore. This especially points to the quickening and sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit, as given to sinners through Jesus Christ, to be the Author of eternal and spiritual life to their souls. The Father sent his only-begotten Son to be our Saviour. The Son, having finished his work, sat down with his Father on the throne, and ever liveth as our Mediator. And the Holy Spirit, as proceeding from the Father and the Son, applies, by his new-creating love and power, this salvation to our souls. May the Lord show to us the streams of this pure river of the water of life, that receiving the precious gift of the life-giving Spirit, we may be made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light.

The trees of life. Such a tree there was in the earthly paradise, Gen. 2. 9. These trees are in the midst of the street, and on either side the river. The trees of life are fed by the pure waters of the river that comes from the throne of God. The presence and perfections of God furnish all the glory and blessedness of heaven. The tree of life brings forth many sorts of fruit, twelve sorts, to all the saints. It brings forth all times; there is always fruit. In heaven there is not only pure and satisfying pleasure, but a continuance of them. The only pleasant, but wholesome, presence of God in heaven is the joy and happiness of the saints;

there they find in him a remedy for all their former maladies, and are preserved by him in the most healthful and vigorous state. This tree was an emblem of Christ and all the blessings of his salvation, communicated constantly and perfectly to his redeemed people in heaven. The leaves for the healing of the nations, implied that his favour and presence would remove and prevent the entrance of all evil, and communicate all good to the inhabitants of that blessed world.

There shall be no more curse, no accursed one—the devil has no power there, he cannot draw the saints from serving God, to be subject to himself, as he did our first parents, nor can he even disturb them in the service of God. There the saints shall see the face of God. God and the Lamb are here spoken of as one. God will own them, as having his seal and name on their foreheads. All creatures shall know that they belong to God, and perceive that they bear his holy image. They shall reign with him for ever, their service shall be not only freedom but honour and dominion. All this shall be with perfect knowledge and joy. They shall be full of wisdom and comfort, continually walking in the light of the Lord, and this not for a time, but for ever and ever. There will be no night, no affliction or dejection, no intermission of service or enjoyment, they will need no candle, no diversions or pleasures of man's devising will there be wanted, not even the requisites suited to our state in this world. How different all this from gross and merely human views of heavenly happiness, even those which include intellectual occupations!

2 Or a tree of life. The definite article is not in the original. There were three trees one in the street and on each side of the river—*Greenfield*.

Ver 6—19. The Lord Jesus then spake by the angel, solemnly ratifying the contents of this book, and particularly of this last vision. It is confirmed. 1. By the name and nature of the one who gave these discoveries. H Lord God faithful and true, and all his sayings. These are faithful sayings, but they that we need to pray continually increase our faith, or we shall be unable to receive them. 2. Also

messengers he chose to reveal these things to the world. The holy angels showed them to holy men of God, and God would not employ his saints and angels in deceiving the world. 3. They are things that must shortly be done, Christ will come quickly, and put all things out of doubt, then those will prove the wise and happy men who believed and kept his words. 4. And by the integrity of that angel who had been the apostle's interpreter. He refused to accept religious adoration from John, and reproved him for it. It is a further confirmation of the suavity of this apostle, that he confesses his own sin and folly, into which he had relapsed, and he leaves it on perpetual record. This shows he was a faithful and impartial writer, and presents another undeniable testimony against the idolatrous worship of saints and angels. 5. An order was given to leave the book of the prophecy open, that all might labour to understand it, and compare the prophecy with the events, ver 10. God calls every one to witness to the declarations here made. 6. This book, thus kept open, will have effect upon men, those who are filthy and unjust, will take occasion from thence to be more so, but it will confirm, strengthen, and further sanctify those who are upright with God. It will be a savour of life to some, and of death to others, and so it will appear to be from God. 7. It will be Christ's rule of judgment at the great day, he will dispense rewards and punishments unto men, accordingly as their works agree or disagree with the word of God, and therefore that word itself must needs be faithful and true. 8. It is the word of him who is the Author, Finisher, and Rewarder of the faith and holiness of his people, ver 13, 14. Those who do the commandments of God, as delivered to sinners in the gospel, by repentance, faith in Christ, and unreserved obedience from gospel motives, are blessed, and they have a right or privilege, derived from grace, to life, or, all the blessings of Christ, and admission into heaven. Never let us think that a dead or faint faith will save us, for the Lord has declared those blessed who do his commandments. It is a book that condemns sinners from heaven all wicked

and unrighteous persons, particularly those who love and make lies, ver. 15, and therefore cannot itself be a lie. There is no middle place or condition intimated, but without the city, even in the lake of fire, are dogs—selfish, greedy, fierce, sensual persons, or apostates, with others of a like hateful character; especially those who love a carnal flattering lie, in preference to the holy humbling truth of God; and who invent or propagate lies for their own selfish purposes. How dreadful will it be to the impenitent and polluted sinner to be left without, and consigned to misery without end. May we be found righteous and holy, and confirmed in Christ's holy favour and service. 10. It is confirmed by the testimony of Jesus, who is the Spirit of prophecy. And this Jesus, as God, is the Root of David, though, as Man, his Offspring. He is the Person in whom all uncreated and created excellences meet. He is too great and too good to deceive his churches and the world. He is the Fountain of all light, the bright and morning Star; and has given his churches this morning light of prophecy, to assure of the light of the perfect day approaching.

Christ rising in his incarnation, appearing in human nature, introduced the gospel day; his rising in power will introduce the millennial day; his rising in the saving influences of his Spirit introduces the spiritual day of grace and comfort; and his appearance to judge the world will introduce the eternal day of light, purity, and joy.—(10.)

11. All is confirmed by an open and general invitation to mankind to come and partake freely of the promises and of the privileges of the gospel; those streams are water of life; they are tendered to all who feel in their souls a thirst which nothing in this world can quench.

12. It is confirmed by the joint testimony of the Spirit of God, and that gracious spirit which is in all the true members of the church of God; the Spirit and the bride join in testifying—

the truth and excellence of The Spirit, by the sacred convictions and influence in the conscience, says, Come to salvation; and the bride, church, militant and triumphant, Come and share our happy every one who hears the inv.

on others to come. Let every one, throughout the earth, who thirsts for salvation, come to Christ. Lest any should hesitate, as notable, to determine whether their thirst be spiritual or not, it is added, Let whosoever will, or, is willing, come and take of the water of life freely. 13. It is confirmed by a most solemn sanction, condemning all who should dare to corrupt or change the word of God, either by adding to it, or taking from it, ver. 18, 19. He that adds to the word of God, draws down upon himself all the plagues written in this book; and he who takes any thing from it, cuts himself off from all its promises and privileges. Such a fence as this, God set about the law, Deut. 4. 2, and the whole Old Testament, Mal. 4. 4, and it applies to the whole Bible as well as to this prophecy; assuring us that it is a book of the most sacred nature, Divine authority, and of the greatest importance, therefore the peculiar care of the great God. Ought not, then, the ministers and professors of the gospel to beware of adding any thing as a restriction on these large and open invitations, or of deducting any thing from them, or of altering in any way the terms of a sinner's acceptance and salvation?

11. What God permits, is often expressed in Holy Writ, by terms which imply commands, and of that which He says, It is done, the execution will follow as if he had commanded it to be done. In the prophetic style, whether a thing be uttered in the past, or in the future, or in the imperative, it is equal; the imperative being really a future, and the future has frequently the force of an imperative.—*Danhus.*

13. Alpha and Omega, &c. This and other like passages incontrovertibly refer to Christ, and according to the known signification of the Jewish expressions, they declare his absolute perfection, his perpetual presence and protection; and that he is the Author, the effective Agent, and the end of the scheme of providential government with respect to the church, which forms the subject of the prophetic books. To perceive their force, we should compare them with the like terms in the Old Testament, applied to Jehovah.—*J. P. Smith.*

14. All spiritual obedience is the fruit of faith; we have no strength for it till we have believed in Christ. It is only by grace received from Christ that we can perform any truly acceptable to God. Till we have received this command, 1 John 3. 22, we are under the sentence of condemnation which can never be reversed, but through faith in Christ. We believe in him, we shall not wish to be reversed, but shall strive for a perfect conformity to his every command. At the same time our pardon will be secured by our own obedience, but on the finished work of Christ.—*Simcox.*

17. Such a declaration of free grace seems inserted just in the close of the sacred canon, to encourage the hope of every humble soul that is truly desirous of the blessings of the gospel; and to guard against any suspicions of the Divine goodness. The word we render "take," often signifies "receive;" and the word "freely" is as much as "gratis;" which implies the freedom of the gift, and probably refers to the invitation, Isa. 55. 1.—*Doddridge*.

Ver. 20, 21. The conclusion is Christ's farewell to his church. He seems now, after discovering these things to his people on earth, to take leave of them, and return to heaven; but he parts in great kindness, and assures them it shall not be long before he comes again. Behold, I come quickly: when he ascended into heaven after his resurrection, he parted with a promise of his gracious presence; here he parts with the promise of a speedy return. If any say, Where is the promise of his coming, when so many ages now are past since this was written? let them know he is not slack to his people, but long-suffering to his enemies. His coming will be sooner than they are aware, sooner than they are prepared, sooner than they desire; but to his people it will be seasonable. The vision is for an appointed time, and will not tarry; he will come quickly; let this word always sound in our ears, and let us give all diligence, that we may be found of him in peace, without spot and blameless. The church joyfully receives Christ's promise; declaring her firm belief of it; Amen, so it is, so it shall be. And expresses her earnest desire of it; Even so, come Lord Jesus; make haste, my Beloved. Thus the desires of the church look forward, thus breathes that gracious Spirit which actuates and informs the mystical body of Christ: and we should never be satisfied, till we find such a Spirit breathing in us, and causing us to look for the blessed hope, and glorious appearance of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ. This is the language of the church of the first-born, and we should join with them, often putting ourselves in mind of his promise. What comes from heaven in a promise, should be paid back to heaven in a prayer. Lord Jesus, end this state of sin and temptation; gather thy people out of this present evil world, and bring us up to heaven, that state of pe-

city, peace, and joy; so finish thy great design, and fulfil all that word in which thou hast caused thy people to hope.

And while we are employed in any services which Providence has assigned us, in our respective stations and circumstances of life; whatever labours may exercise us, whatever difficulties may surround us, whatever sorrows may depress us, let us with pleasure hear our Lord proclaiming, Behold, I come quickly—I come to put a period to the labour and suffering of my servants; I come, and my reward of grace is with me, to recompense, with royal bounty, every work of faith and labour of love; I come to receive my faithful persevering people to myself, to dwell for ever in that blissful world, where the sacred volume which contains the discoveries of my will shall be no more necessary; but knowledge, and holiness, and joy, shall be poured in upon their souls in a more immediate, in a nobler, and more effectual manner. Amen, even so, come Lord Jesus.—(80.)

An apostolical benediction closes the whole. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all, Amen. The Bible ends with a clear declaration of the Godhead of Christ; the Spirit of God teaches the apostle to bless his people in the name of Christ, and to beg from Christ a blessing for them; this is a proper act of adoration. Nothing should be more desired by us than that the grace of Christ may be with us in this world, to prepare us for the glory of Christ in the other world. By his grace we must be kept in joyful expectation of his glory, fitted for it, and preserved to it; and his glorious appearance will be welcome and joyful to those who partake of his grace and favour here; and therefore to this most comprehensive prayer let all add a hearty Amen. Let us earnestly thirst after greater measures of the gracious influences of the blessed Jesus in our souls, and his gracious presence with us, till glory has perfected his work towards us; for he is a Sun which, when he gives grace and glory, nothing will he withhold from them who walk uprightly. Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

ON THE PROPHETIC VISIONS OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION.

The book of the Revelation, consists almost wholly of prophetic declarations, expressed in figurative language. It has always been considered the most difficult portion of sacred scripture, and has engaged the attention of more commentators and expositors than any other book. But it is impossible here to attempt to give a list even of the principal writers upon this important book, or summaries of the various schemes of interpretation which have been devised. These are of the widest and also of the most limited extent. Some restrict the whole symbolical portion of the Apocalypse to the destruction of Jerusalem, and the civil wars of the romans at that period; others go as far back as the creation, as well as extend the application to the consummation of all things. There is scarcely an event of any importance, recorded in sacred or general history since the fall of man, to which some portion of the Apocalypse has not been considered to allude. The importance of this book is indeed manifest when we reflect, that whatever difference may exist as to the interpretation of the various symbols and figurative allusions, no one can mistake the great object in view, namely, to declare that the cause of Christ shall eventually triumph, and that although his faithful followers have been and are opposed by foes without and enemies within, yet it is written as with a sunbeam, that "the Lamb shall overcome them." We hence are assured that all events are under the control of Him that doeth all things aright, and though clouds and darkness envelop his throne, though we cannot assign the reasons for every providential dispensation respecting the church of Christ, yet we may, from this book, clearly know, that in the end all shall be well with the righteous. In this respect, the contents of this precious book are invaluable, nor can we ever learn, till the great day has arrived, the extent to which its statements have proved blessings to suffering saints; how many have hereby been cheered and supported under afflictions; encouraged and strengthened for active zeal; and borne up above all the trials and sufferings of this sublunary state.

The histories of the martyrs, that the church thus derive comfort from this book in their persecution, and chiefly applied in those trying periods. And has engrossed the attention of those fording the most incontestable the Divine origin of the scrip-

ture. completion of a considerable portion of its contents. Partly, however, from carrying endeavours of this description too far, and partly from the natural anxiety of the human mind to unveil every subject of a mysterious nature, to use the words of *Guyse*, "The meaning of these wonderful prophecies has been searched into, with great care and diligence, by many learned and pious men, of former and later ages, but their interpretations in various instances are so different and contradictory, and several are so evidently proved by after acts to be entire mistakes, that we must not presume to be positive in determining upon all the events that answer even such predictions, as may justly be supposed to have been already fulfilled; much less in fixing the exact time for the accomplishment of those that are still to be fulfilled." A stronger animadversion upon the latter class of writers is necessary, and it cannot be given better than in the temperate, yet firm remark of *Sir Isaac Newton*; "The folly of interpreters has been to foretell times and things by the prophecy of the Revelation, as if God designed to make them prophets. The design of God was, when he gave this book and the prophecies of the Old Testament, not to gratify men's curiosity, by enabling them to foreknow things, but to the end that after they were fulfilled, they might be interpreted by the event; and so his own providence, not the wisdom or skill of interpreters, might be manifested thereby to the world." "And," to use the words of *Whitaker*, "the reader is not to be led into a matter of mere literary investigation, but of practical consequence; to the contemplation of the regular appearance of the signs of the constant, though gradual approach of that day, when the Judge of the world will appear to put away every thing which offendeth, and all who do iniquity, out of his kingdom, and gather his own servants together, to reign before them gloriously."

The comment in the preceding pages was constructed with these remarks in view. The endeavour has been to select such statements as appeared best calculated, under the Divine blessing, to edify and assist the humble inquiring believer; and, to notice those passages which appear to be fulfilled; but not to define or analyze closely, still less to attempt individual application, a mistake most, even of our best commentators more or less fallen. Nor attempt made to offer definite conclusions upon those passages which are held to belong to unfulfilled prophecy,

although there is no intention to dispute what appears now a prevalent opinion, which may thus be stated: "Time is rapidly rolling on, the prophetic word is rapidly accomplishing; we know of but little that we can assuredly say will intervene between us and the return of our beloved Lord; four thousand years passed before our Lord's first coming, nearly two thousand have since passed; the shaking of the nations, and the uprooting of ancient things, bid the christian to lift up his head in hope that the night is far spent, and the coming of the Lord draweth nigh."—*Bickersteth*.

It appears necessary also to present some further information as to the views of recent commentators on the Apocalypse, though the reader must be referred to the writings of the authors themselves for the laborious and ingenious arguments by which their respective schemes are supported. Here, as in reference to Daniel, we may remark that the writings of *Faber* and *Cunningham* appear to include most of the leading ideas at present entertained which are worthy of notice, but some additions may be made, particularly from *Woodhouse*, who adopted the following as a controlling principle of interpretation,—“That unless the language and symbols of the Apocalypse should in particular passages direct or evidently require another mode of application, the predictions are to be applied to events occurring in the progressive kingdom of Christ. That the subject of this prophetic book will appear to be generally the fates and fortunes of the christian church, from the ascension of our Lord, and the preaching of his apostles, to the great consummation of all things.” How much the field of research is narrowed by the adoption of this rule, and how many difficulties and hindrances are removed, will be at once appreciated by those who merely glance at the numerous authors now claiming the public attention. *Woodhouse* says, “In the wide field of universal history, innumerable events may be selected by the industry of investigators, seeming to bear resemblance to the figurative pictures of holy writ. Instances of wars, famines, conquests, and revolutions, may be separated from that infinite mass of information, appearing to assimilate to images presented in prophecy. Some restriction is therefore necessary to guide investigation, and what can be deemed more proper than this principle, which gives its authority from the analogy of sacred scripture?” *Woodhouse* also gives another controlling principle, from the nature and kind of that kingdom which is the great object of the prophecies. It is not temporal but spiritual,

in a great degree independent of the fates and revolutions of empires; affected only by those changes in the political world which are calculated to produce the increase or decline of religious knowledge, or of pure profession and practice. In stating this rule of interpretation, he says, “That as the kingdom of Christ, the object of the apocalyptic prophecies, is spiritual, so they are to be understood in a spiritual sense. Spiritual things are to be compared with spiritual, 1 Cor. 2. 13.”

Many of the speculations, even of the most esteemed commentators, on the Apocalypse, are set aside by the application of these valuable rules, and much of the difficulties into which *Mede* and *Bishop Newton* led themselves and their readers, and from whence they could not satisfactorily extricate themselves, are thus avoided. Even many of the views of our best approved later writers must fall before these tests, although differences of opinion may arise as to the limits of their application.

Few commentators on the Apocalypse have proceeded according to the caution of *Gihin*. “Prophecy was given us to prove the truth, not to exercise the imagination.” “And if ever genuine humility,” says *Keith*, “be a virtue, or proud arrogance a crime—if ever there be an occasion or a time, as there can never fail to be, for abjuring all vain boasting and rendering unto God the glory, it is with an humble heart and with a trembling and uplifted hand, that it behoves any erring mortal to enter on the grave but not hopeless task of interpreting any portion of that book, which is the theme of angelic praise, and the revelation of Jesus Christ.”

The interpretation adopted by *Mede* is given in the following diagram from his work, with a few additions to explain the meanings he attaches to the symbols. *Mede* is considered as the father of modern interpreters of the Apocalypse, from the ability with which he advocates the principle of synchronization. He is too much inclined to refer to the temporal events connected with the roman empire, and few now receive his system as fully satisfactory. The sealed book *Mede* represents as in this sense the empire. The little book open, is representing the fates of the church.



THE FIRST PROPHECY, OR THE SEVEN SEALS.

SEALS.

THE SEVENTH SEAL, INCLUDING SEVEN TRUMPETS.

The first Six, distinguished periods of the roman empire.

1	Promulgation of christianity.
2	Intestine wars, and slaughter of the jews under Trajan and Hadrian.
3	Severe administration of justice under Severus and Alexander.
4	Sword, famine, and pestilence united from Maximin to Gallienus.
5	Persecutions of christians, Aurelian to Dioclesian, &c.
6	Overthrow of paganism under Constantine, &c.

Six TRUMPETS. The roman empire declining and falling.

1	A.D. 395. Goths under Alaric.
2	Destruction of Rome, and division of the empire, about A.D. 456.
3	Deposition of Augustulus by Odoacer, A.D. 476.
4	Final overthrow of the roman imperial power.
5	First woe Saracens or arabs.
6	Second woe. Turks from the Euphrates. A.D. 1057.

Trumpet 7, or third woe.*

The mystery of God is finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets.

The company of 144,000 protected by the mark of God,

THE VIALS.*

1. to 6.

An innumerable multitude of all nations, kindreds, & tongues, having palms in their hands.

the lake of fire,
THE END,
the paradise of the just.

The temple and altar measured.
The first state of the church proved to be holy.
The dragon's war with Michael.
Persecutions under the roman emperors till Constantine attains the imperial power.

The outer court, not measured, trodden down by the gentiles 42 months.
The christian church given up to new idolatries.
The two witnesses prophesy. Interpreters of Divine truth.
The woman, the church, flies into the wilderness.
Floods of heresies removed by the orthodox.
The beast recovers after his deadly wound, blasphemes and conquers the saints.
The secular roman empire.
The two-horned-beast, or false prophet.
The roman pontiff and his clergy.
The founder of the ten-horned beast exercises his power of warring with the saints.
The 144,000 the church, faithful.

The kingdoms of this world are made kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ.

Satan bound, and the just reign with Christ 1000 years.

The wife of the Lamb, new Jerusalem, descends from heaven.

* The Seven vials portend gradations of the ruin of the beast, beginning when the waldensians and others began to renounce its authority. This method of arranging the vials mostly under the Sixth trumpet, is considered the most defective part of Mene's scheme.

THE LITTLE OPE

TRIFTS OF PROPHECY.

658 ON THE PROPHETIC VISIONS OF THE BOOK OF REVELATION.

The scheme adopted by *Faber*, being the most elaborate, and purporting to be the most complete yet offered to the public, as embracing and harmonizing the prophecies of Daniel and those of John, deserves especial notice, and may be presented in an abridgment of the chronology of the sacred calendar of prophecy, appended to his work, with a few additions, which will explain the application he proposes to make of all the leading events symbolized in the sacred record.

- Years before Christ.**
FROM FABER'S CHRONOLOGY OF THE SACRED CALENDAR OF PROPHECY. 1828.
- 2325 Foundation of the babylonian empire, D. 7. 4. } First beast.
 - 830 It is brought down to the ground
 - 784 Foundation of the persian empire, D. 7. 5; 8. 2, 20. Second beast.
 - Commencement of the 2300 days, D. 8. 14.
 - 763 Foundation of the macedonian empire, D. 7. 6. Third beast.
 - 753 Foundation of the roman empire, D. 7. 7. Fourth beast.
 - First head of the roman beast, R. 13. 1; 17. 3, 9, 10.
 - 657 Era of the metallic image, D. 2. 31, 32, 38.
 - Commencement of the seven prophetic times, D. 4. 32.
 - Birth of Nebuchadnezzar, the golden head.
 - Opening of the first seal, R. 6. 1, 2.
 - 606 Commencement of the babylonian captivity of seventy years.
 - 563 The heart of a man given to the babylonian lion.
 - 556 The persian ram begins to push, D. 8. 4; Cyrus' conquests.
 - 538 Junction of the persian empire, or silver breast and arms, D. 2. 32, 39.
 - Opening of the second apocalyptic seal, R. 6. 3, 4.
 - 536 End of babylonian captivity, side becomes higher, D. 7. 5. Horn becomes higher, D. 8. 3.
 - 509 Dormancy of imperial kingship, or first head of roman beast begins; Rise of the consulate, or second head, R. 17. 10.
 - 497 Dictatorship, or third head, R. 17. 10.
 - 458 Commencement of Daniel's seventy weeks, D. 9. 24.
 - 451 Decemvirate, or fourth head.
 - 444 Military tribunes, or fifth head.
 - 334 Macedonian goat comes from the west, D. 8. 5.
 - 331 Junction of grecian empire, or brazen belly and thighs.—Opening of the third seal, R. 6. 5, 6.
 - 59 Triumvirate, or sixth head.
 - 30 Junction of roman empire, or iron legs and iron clay feet.—Opening of the fourth seal, R. 6. 7, 8.
 - 27 Exasperation of Roman imperial kingship, or first head, fall of the 2nd, 3rd, and 6th heads, R. 17. 10.
- After Christ.**
- 33 End of Daniel's seventy weeks, D. 9. 24; Death of Christ.
 - 70 Daniel's 1290 days begin, D. 11. 32, 33; Persecution of christians begins.
 - 311 Opening of fifth seal, R. 6. 8—11.—It indicates a short and imperfect rest from persecution.
 - 313 Opening of the sixth seal, D. 11. 34; Help from Constantine begins.
 - 324 The subversion of paganism; Sealing of the 144,000 mystic israelites; Measuring the temple; Taking an exact account of the faithful worshippers; Constantine's separation of christians.
 - Commencement of the figurative gestation, R. 12. 2.—Opening seventh seal.
 - 385 First germination of little western horn, or spiritual kingdom of the papacy begins, D. 7. 8.
 - 361 End of the short silence, R. 8. 1; Accession of Julian.—Seven angels prepare to sound.
 - 395 First Trumpet. Invasion of Goths, Germans, Vandals, and Huns, by Alaric, Rhadagant, Genseric, and Attila.
 - 406 Rise of first, or vandahic horn, D. 7. 7. R. 12. 1; 17. 3, 12.—Junction of iron and clay toes.
 - 407 Rise of second or suevic horn, third or alaric, fourth or burgundian, fifth or francic.
 - 408 Sixth or visigothic horn.
 - 439 Second trumpet. Invasion of Genseric.
 - 449 Seventh or anglo-saxon horn.
 - 462 Third trumpet. The star cast down. Odoacer. Wormwood.
 - 476 Eighth or herulic horn—wars and desolations, extinction of roman western empire.
 - 493 Ninth or ostrogothic, eradication of eighth or herulic.
 - 553 Eradication of ninth or ostrogothic before the papal horn.
 - 568 Tenth or lombardic horn, eradicated 774, since which the eastern empire by Chosroes and the persians.
 - 603 Fourth trumpet. Commencement of the fifth or arabic horn empire by Chosroes and the persians.
 - 604 EXPIRATION OF THE FIRST PERIOD. THE LATTER PERIOD BEGINS.
 - Fifth, or first woe trumpet.—The mensuration of temple and altar.
 - Two witnesses (two faithful of the woman's) (the faithful church).
 - Fall of the stars (bishops or prelates), dragon, R. 12.
 - The ten-headed beast becomes the secular powers of the roman empire.
 - HALF TIMES, OR 1260 YEARS.
 - It completes its fall, R. 9. 1.
 - in sackcloth, R. 11. 3.
 - wilderness, R. 12.
 - of superstitious fostered by the
 - months, the unfaithful worshippers

Years
after
Christ.

FABER'S CHRONOLOGY.

- 604 Rise of the second apocalyptic beast, or papal empire, R. 13. 11.
Ten horns, or roman kings, give their power to the beast, R. 17.
Saints thereby delivered into the hand of the little roman horn, D. 7. 25.
Completion of the demoniatrix apostasy, by the revelation of the man of sin, the roman empire being removed, D. 8. 2 Thess. 2.
Termination of the period, D. 11. 35.
Door of the abyss opened, Rev. 9. 2.
- 608 Smoké from the abyss, the mohammedan imposture, or the little horn of grecian he goat
or 9 stands up, D. 8. 9, 23.
- 612 The mohammedan locusts issue forth for five months.
- 628 End of eclipse of eastern empire; defeat of persians; battle of Nineveh.
- 762 End of five months of the locusts; passing away of first woe; Bagdad founded; the saracens become a settled people.
- 800 Restoration of roman emperors in the west.
- 1301 Sixth trumpet. Second woe.
Liberation of the four turcomanic angels.
Day, month, and year, or 396½ years of suphratian horsemen begin.
- 1360 Expiration of Daniel's 1290 years, D. 12. 11; Wickliff begins to preach.
- 1453 Roman emperors in the east.
- 1517 Termination of Daniel's 2300 days.
Sanctuary begins to be cleansed, D. 8. 13, 14. R. 11. 2.
Flesh of the harlot begins to be eaten, or the papacy begins to be consumed by the secular power, R. 17. 16.
Commencement of the reformation.
- 1686 The two witnesses (waldenses and albigenses) slain.
- 1688 Great earthquake; Tenth part of the city falls; Revolution in England.
- 1689 Witnesses (the waldenses) revive, but their testimony finished.
- 1697 Second woe passes away; Battle of Zenta, Turks defeated.—The 396½ years expire.
The dragon begins to cast out a flood, R. 12. 9.
Termination of period, D. 11. 35; Commencement of, D. 11. 36—39, infidelity.
- 1789 Seventh trumpet. Third woe commences; revolutionary France.
The figurative judgment of the roman empire begins, R. 11. 15. D. 7. 9.
The stone begins to smite the image.
The flood rising to its height.
The spirit of the great antichrist, which denies the Father and the Son, is diffused, and constitutes the third woe.
The papal harlot made desolate and naked, R. 17. 16.
- 1792 First vial poured out ... Aug. 26. Sore of avowed infidelity.
Second vial poured out ... Sept. 2. Reign of terror.
Third vial poured out ... Nov. 19. War with nations.
- 1804 Fourth vial poured out ... Imperial military despotism.
Rise of the francic emperors, or short-lived and slain head (seventh) of roman beast.
- 1806 Fall of the roman imperial kingship, or long-lived first head.
- 1808 Fifth vial poured on the throne of the beast. The decline and fall of the francic emperors.
The termination of the period, D. 11. 36—39.
- 1815 Political slaughter of francic emperors, or seventh head; consequent political death of the roman beast, R. 17. 8.
Sixth vial. The downfall of the ottoman empire, probably began with the greek insurrection in 1821; The kings of the east, perhaps the jews.
Revival of the francic emperors will be subsequent to the fall of the ottoman empire, R. 17. 8.
Going forth of the three unclean spirits; The kings of the earth wrought up to fury by the political-theological agents of the dragon, the beast, and the false prophet; The gathering together an unseemly mixture of blaspheming infidels and bigoted romanists.
- 1864 EXPIRATION OF THE SEVEN PROPHETIC TIMES, OR 2520 YEARS, AND OF THE TIMES OF THE FOUR GREAT GENTILE EMPIRES.
Seventh vial.
Commencement of Daniel's time of end, 11. 40—45, and of the restoration of his people the jews, D. 12. 1. L. 21. 24.
Marriage of the Lamb, or conversion of Judah.
R. 19. 6. Isa. 60. 66. 5—24. D. 12. 1. Joel 3. 16. Zech. 12. 14. Rom. 11.
- 1865 Expiration of Daniel's time of the third woe: Burning the harlot; Battle of Armageddon; Fall of Son of man; Destruction of antichrist in Palestine; Dissipation of Mohammedan horn broken; The Stone fills the whole earth; The dragon; The 1335 days begin, D. 12. 12; St. John's vision, R. 20. 2, 3, begin; not a literal reign of Christ, but an effort of the thousand years.
- 2865 Second figurative resurrection of the thousand years.
- 3200 The termination of the 12th and Magog, Ezek. 38.
The consummation of all things.
Of that day and hour knoweth no man, but my Father only.
Matt. 24. 36.

Such is the scheme described by *Townsend* as solving more difficulties, answering more objections, and throwing a brighter lustre on some of the more involved passages of the Apocalypse, than that of any other author, adding, however, that "he has failed in some instances, and neither his learning, originality, nor talent, can rescue him from the consequences—a suspicion of want of judgment." In reference to the systems both of *Mede* and *Faber*, we cannot but fear that they have both in too many instances lost sight of the view, "that the primary object of the Holy Spirit throughout the book of the Revelation, is to develop the events of the kingdom of Christ, which is a kingdom not of this world; and not to obtrude upon our notice the rise and fall of empires any further than these are needful to illustrate the affairs of the former."—*W. Jones*.

If the reader however is not inclined to relinquish the idea that the first four seals have reference to historical events of the roman empire; a scheme which seems to have been modified from that adopted by *Whitaker*, may be submitted for consideration. The first seal is applied to that era which commenced from the death of Domitian, A. D. 96, and extended to the accession of Commodus, A. D. 180, a period happy and prosperous as to public events. Thus the first spectacle revealed to the prophet would be the commencement or going forth of an era of prosperity and beneficent government, which then actually began in the roman empire, and continued under five successive emperors, for nearly a century, in which time also the empire was enlarged by distant conquests. (In *Poole's Annotations*, the first seal also is considered as referring to the roman emperors, armed with power.) The red horse of civil war, and the great sword wherewith men should kill one another, marks the period, from A. D. 180 to 378, during which there were thirty-eight emperors, not to mention pretenders, of whom thirty-two perished by the sword of conspiracy or war. The third and fourth seals may represent the state of the empire from A. D. 376 to A. D. 456, as over-ridden and enslaved by the rider on the black horse, the barbarians, goths, and germans, bringing bondage a famine upon the land; and the pale or coloured horse, marking the period of ruin of the empire was sealed by the of the huns and vandals, when the countries of the roman world were devastated by war, pestilence, and and in some provinces the human race was almost exterminated.

Of this interval *Robertson* speaks as the period in the history of the world, during which the condition of the human race was the most calamitous and afflicted.

We next proceed to *Cuninghame*, whose writings on prophecy have lately engaged much attention, and who differs considerably from *Faber* and others in many respects; and having the advantage of following them he is enabled to avoid many of the difficulties into which they have fallen, and to correct some of their mistakes. In the remarks on Daniel, the calculations of *Cuninghame* are noticed as well as those of *Faber*, on the periods mentioned by Daniel and John, and that subject need not be resumed. It may be well here to remark, that *Cuninghame* considers the events under the first six seals, as extending from the promulgation of christianity to the consummation of all things. Those of the seventh seal he considers (with *Vitringa* and others) to include a new series of prophecies. This he apprehends is indicated by the silence in heaven, ch. 8. 1, which disunites the succeeding series from those which had gone before, and unfolds a new chain of predictions, having the same commencement and termination as the series which preceded.

The mighty angel in ch. 10. *Cuninghame* concludes to be our Lord himself, and the little book which is given to the prophet to eat, to signify that the time is arrived when the obscure prophecies of the book of Daniel should be fully understood by the servants of the Lord. His descent is considered to be the time of the end. The Angel sets one foot upon the sea, and the other on the earth, to signify that he is now about to take possession of his kingdom. The little book itself is considered to be that part of the book with seven seals which was under the seventh seal, not the same volume as that of Daniel, but the same in substance, as referring to the same events.

The annexed table, taken, with some explanatory additions, from a diagram prefixed to his work, gives *Cuninghame's* view of the first five seals and of the former part of the seventh seal, which he considers is parallel with them. Those under the sixth seal and the latter part of the seventh seal were represented in his diagram, but his views are stated in a brief summary, which will find on the page that follows. It is desirable again according to the view of this seal and the seventh comprise the same period, and that the seventh seal are parallel to the other six seals.

CUNINGHAME'S TABULAR VIEW.

THE FIRST FIVE SEALS.		THE SEVENTH SEAL		
		includes the events in these columns, as parallel with those in the first five Seals, and also those subsequent, which are parallel with the events of the SIXTH SEAL.		
SEAL I. White horse and crowned rider. A. D. 83 to 312. Triumphs of the gospel.	Silence in heaven, ch. 8. 1, (indicating a new series of prophecies.)	The woman clothed with the sun (is the church,)	War of Michael and the dragon, who is cast out of heaven.	
	Incense offered, 3, 4, (the prayers of the saints.)	has a man child (Christ formed in his members.) About 313—324.	About A. D. 313—324. (Contest between christianity and heathenism, and triumph of the gospel.)	
SEAL II. Fire coloured horse, his rider with a great sword, begins about 319.	Fire cast on the earth, (the wrath of God on the roman empire.)	The woman lies into the wilderness. (The church is concealed and invisible, and no longer has spiritual children.)	The dragon (the devil) persecutes the woman, and casts out a flood of waters after her. (Hosts of enemies and bitter afflictions and sufferings of the church.)	
	Earthquake, A. D. 312—324. Paganism ceased.		The 1260 years begin.	
SEAL III. Black horse, his rider with a yoke, begins about A. D. 500.	The Trumpets. 1 The visigoths, A. D. 376 2 Alaric 395 3 Attila 441 4 Genseric 455 Odoacer 476 The irruptions of the goths and vandals.	Edict of Justinian, acknowledging the pope.		
	This space represents A. D. 533.			
SEAL IV. Pale livid green horse, his rider, death, followed by hell, begins about A. D. 1200.	Fifth trumpet, or woe 1. Fallen star opens the pit, (the bishop of Rome.) about A. D. 533. Locusts about 632.	The temple measured. (The invisible church.) The outer court left out, and given to the gentiles, who occupy it during the 1260 years. (The visible professing church occupied by degenerate professors.) The temple in heaven, or holy of holies, (signifying heaven,) shut during the 1260 years. Also a symbol of the future and glorious kingdom of Christ upon earth, when the rule of the papacy shall be overthrown.	The two witnesses (the true spiritual church) prophesy in sackcloth 1260 years (testify against corruptions.) slain, A. D. 1540. (The Interim in Germany.) Rise, 1531. Ascend to the symbolical heaven, A. D. 1552. (Security from the peace of Passau.) The earthquake, which overthrows a tenth part of the city, begins A. D. 1507, ends A. D. 1688. (The reformation and separation of England from the papal yoke)	
	Sixth Trumpet, or woe 2. Euphratians loosed, prepared to slay the third part of men.		The woman is nourished in the wilderness, and her seed is persecuted by the Dragon during the 1260 years. (True christians sought out and persecuted with malignant activity.)	
SEAL V. Souls of slain martyrs (the church, apparently extirpated) cry for vengeance, about A. D. 1500. White robes given them about 1552. Improved state of the church in consequence of the reformation.	(The Turks,)		The ten-horned beast (the roman empire after its division) has power to continue 1260 years. Contemporary with it is the two-horned beast (the papacy) and the image, (the church deformed and corrupted.)	
	begins about A. D. 1302, ends (at the peace of Carlowitz) A. D. 1686 (since which the turkish yoke has been on the			
This line represents		the revolution, the end of the 1260 years.		
SEAL VI.		See the following summary.		

Cuninghame considers that the events under the sixth seal briefly describe the great revolution in the latter days, which is to precede the establishment of the kingdom of God. This, as he supposes, commenced A. D. 1792, with the french revolution, indicated by the great earthquake ch. 6. 12, but that an interval of calm, perhaps not of rest, is afforded previously to the last dreadful shock which is to bring utter destruction upon the wicked. The four angels holding the winds, he thinks, represent the four powers employed as instruments to procure this interval. The sealed, ch. 7. 4, appear to be the true members of Christ, set apart and saved from the general destruction of the ungodly, and the interval of peace has given occasion to new activity and more widely extended exertions in circulating the sacred scriptures. The palm-bearing multitude he refers to the illustrious appearance and establishment of the kingdom of our Lord, described Dan. 7. 13, 14, 27, being a portion of the professing church, left in the midst of the great tribulation, to be united to the faithful part, counted worthy of escaping the troubles which should come to pass.

The preceding table represents the views of *Cuninghame* with reference to that part of the events under the seventh seal, prior to A. D. 1792, when he considers that the Ancient of days came, and the judgment began to sit, to take away the dominion of the little horn, to consume it unto the end, Dan. 7. 21. It remains to state his views as to the latter part of this seal. We now enter upon Rev. 14. The 144,000 sealed being placed on mount Zion, indicates the security and final salvation of the true church during the awful convulsions of the great earthquake, the first shock of which took place at the french revolution in 1792, when the seventh trumpet began to sound. Although believers may suffer many things as individual persons, the church as a body shall be saved. The first proclaiming angel, ver. 6, is supposed to represent a preaching of the gospel much more extensive than any that preceded it, and a diffusion of the written word throughout the world, in a manner and with a rapidity before unexampled. These events are now receiving their accomplishment. The going forth of the second and third angels are future, though already preparing; and, Babylon is fallen and the beast slain, the church will enter into the glorious rest. The advent of Christ is next, with the gathering in of his holized by the harvest and the wine press, which prefigure the destruction of the nations together against the people of God.

The pouring forth the vials or bowls, *Cuninghame* also refers to the period of the french revolution. The first signifying the diffusion of the principles of anarchy and insubordination, which accompanied the national avowal of atheism at that period. These principles of irreligion and insubordination he considers have been the germ and fruitful source of all the fearful calamities which have been poured forth on Europe. 2. The destruction of human life in massacres and campaigns, among the french nation, as the most numerous body of people in the roman world. 3. The loss of life in the other smaller nations and states. 4. The symbolical sun represents the government of France, whether republican or imperial, ruining by ravages and exactions, and tormenting the men of the roman earth, yet they make no attempt to avert the wrath of God by timely repentance. 5. The seat of the beast is considered to denote successively Austria and France, distressed during the revolutionary and imperial wars, and since then the vial is poured upon England; the counsels of the kingdom on which it descends being smitten with blindness and foolishness. 6. The Euphrates is considered to denote the ottoman empire hastening to decay; the kings of the east probably denote the jews, but the accomplishment of the events here shadowed forth is yet future. The three unclean spirits, he says, are now manifestly at work—the spirit of atheism, or infidelity and anarchy, from the mouth of the dragon or Satan himself; the spirit of despotism from the mouth of the beast; and the spirit of popery from the mouth of the false prophet. 7. The symbolical air represents the political and ecclesiastical constitutions of the states, agitated through the bestial empire, the earthquake of the sixth seal, and that of the seventh trumpet and seventh vial, being the same, all these passages affording different views of the last great revolution, which immediately precedes the second advent. And the vision of the four angels holding the four winds of the earth, relates to an interval of peace in the midst of the earthquake, granted for the purpose of sealing the elect, typifying the mighty confederacy led on by four great powers which gave peace to Europe. Thus out the seventh vial is for the 2) suspended. The division is probably will be religious r it may betoken a threefold ie states under the three un- Great Babylon betokens the h, and the islands and moun- d mean states and kingdoms, or disappearing; the great hail, and relentless wars since 1792.

Cunninghame says, "The effects of the seventh vial are detailed more fully in ch. 17, 18, 19, but as the greater part are still future, we must wait patiently until events throw light upon them. But all the revolutionary changes which take place in consequence of the effusion of this vial into this symbolical air, will tend to prepare the roman empire for that last blasphemous opposition to the Lamb in which it shall perish." He does not consider any national reformation is likely to take place in the western empire. Many individuals will probably be awakened to true repentance, but the great majority will wax worse and worse, and bring down upon themselves the signal vengeance of the Almighty Word of Jehovah, in the day of Armageddon. But it would be very rash to form conjectures with regard to the shape which the empire will assume preparatory to that event. That day is also mentioned under the sixth vial as the object of the last confederacy, which may be to oppose the purposes of God with respect to the jews, whose conversion will proceed with accelerated velocity during the remainder of the period of the pouring forth of the vials; some being converted at their restoration, but the greater part still remaining unconverted.

Thus *Cunninghame* supposes the seven vials are contemporaneously poured out on the different parts of the same symbolical world. 1. Affects the political, religious, and moral principles of the people. 2 and 3. Causes the slaughter of its inhabitants. 4. Affects the imperial power in its influential effects upon human happiness. 5. Affects the same as to its authority and stability. 6. Destroys the ottoman power. 7. Dissolves the whole frame of the political and ecclesiastical government of the empire.

In reference to the destruction of Babylon by fire, ch. 18, it is stated that the ancient jews believed that Rome would be destroyed by material fire like Sodom and Gomorrah. *Cunninghame* mentions this, and considers that by whatever means it is effected, the incorrigibly wicked will be exterminated from the earth before the millennium, and amidst these dark scenes of deepening judgments, he thinks the future fates of England will be unfavourable.

Cunninghame considers that the advent of our Lord, before the loosing of the outbreak of desolations, will bring peace and safety, but with the affairs and even the world, yet in a season of alarm and fear, when the hearts of men are filled with dismay. Both of mind he considers as exhibiting events of the times wherein we

that we have entered into the last period of awful expectation, during which the church is likened to the ten virgins, Matt. 25. He considers that the coming of our Lord is just at hand, when the dead saints will spring from the dust, and the living saints in a moment be changed, and both together will be rapt up above the clouds to meet Him long before he is seen by the inhabitants of the earth. He does not consider that the restoration of the jews will precede this advent, but that it will begin just at the rapture of the saints, and that they are to be led through the wilderness as formerly, by the pillar of a cloud by day, and of fire by night, without knowing their conductor as the crucified Nazarene, their discovery of him belonging to a later period. At this time the whirlwind of wrath will go forth against the roman earth, the political heavens will pass away as a scroll, the war of Armageddon will commence, and in its progress make the world a wilderness, probably beginning as an intestine war of the nations against themselves. A long interval is to elapse between the first appearance of our Lord above the clouds, and the descent mentioned, Zecl. 14. 4, 5, and Rev. 19. 11. During the whole of this interval the glorified church shall be with our Lord in the air, in the higher region of the atmosphere above the clouds, a part of the church however being left in the midst of the great tribulation, to form the nucleus of the innumerable company of palm bearers. But here we may stop; *Cunninghame* himself states that he wishes his further views respecting this multitude "to be considered simply as conjecture."

It appeared necessary to give the leading views of distinguished modern writers on the Apocalypse, but it is not less needful to observe that in too many instances speculations on these subjects engross the inquirer, to the exclusion of more important, and the most momentous concerns. Against such results good cautions are given by *Cunninghame* himself. "We have no warrant in scripture to neglect the duties of our secular callings; on the contrary, we are commanded to be diligent in all lawful business, and God has, in various instances, marked with his peculiar approval, the industrious performance of worldly duties. The true secret of christianity is, to attend diligently to all the duties of life, yet to do it, not in the spirit of legalism, but with the temper and feelings of those who are habitually impressed with the realities of eternity—to do all to God, not to man." And if such remarks are applicable as to our secular duties, much more are they important in relation to our spiritual interests. In

reference to this mysterious book especially, the caution of *Bengel* should not be forgotten: "In the Revelation, the holiness of God is amply displayed; therefore, both the expositor and the reader should have their hearts prepared to show a holy fear and becoming reverence. Whatever God teaches, that we ought diligently to apply ourselves to learn; neither seeking for more, nor contenting ourselves with less, and we ought also to apply it all to his glory and our salvation, and to the exciting our devout feelings; and not to waste all our labour on mere knowledge. But many deal with the prophecies, as they do with an enigma. Before it is solved, they have an exciting impatience, an eager expectation, and even a pleasing anxiety for the solution, but as soon as it is solved, they are weary of that enigma, and want a new one. Therefore we may conclude, that if any man could, at once, give full and satisfactory answers to all the questions, he would have little thanks, as he would only spoil their amusement."

There is no intention here to describe the *controversies* which have arisen, from the different views taken, relative to the Apocalypse, and especially those connected with the views of the two writers, whose schemes have been last abstracted. The words of *Mede* to *Hayns*, relative to the discussions of his day, seem equally applicable to those of our own times, "The wit of man is able, where it is persuaded, to find shifts and answers, until the day of doom; as appears in such different opinions held among christians, with so much, and such endless pertinacity on both sides; it is sufficient therefore for a man to propound his opinion with the strongest evidence and arguments he can, and so to leave it. Truth will be justified of her children. But of these reciprocations of discourse in writing, wherein you place so much benefit for the discovery of truth, I have often heard and seen truth lost thereby, but seldom or never found."—It is but just to *Faber* to observe, that he for the most part appears to have pursued the course here recommended by *Mede*. How far others have done so, the pages of our periodical journals, and the counters of booksellers sufficiently declare!

The annotations of *Woodhouse* are justly considered as among the most valuable of the numerous works on the Apocalypse. Reference has already been made to the admirable principles upon which it proceeded, and a brief sketch of his respect to the principal seal-book, may be desirable to the reader.

The four horses of the first four seals, which *Woodhouse* considers as representing the go-

vernment of some power divinely commissioned to effect changes upon the earth, and that the character of the change is to be collected from the colour of the horse. His applications of this view are already given in the comment. The fifth seal he applies to christian martyrs, not restricting it to those of any particular period. In the sixth seal, the earthquake denotes dreadful judgments, pointing ultimately and emphatically to the great day of the Lord's wrath. The 144,000 sealed, he hesitates whether to apply to the Jews restored and adopted into the christian church, or to pious christians of all denominations, the first fruits to Christ; while the gentiles of later conversion follow as the palm-bearing multitude, and the sealed delivered out of great tribulation, when the enemies of Christ are left to their terrible fate.

Woodhouse then proceeds, in accordance with the scheme of interpretation adopted by *Vitrunga*, which distinguishes the prophetic history of the seals from that of the trumpets. It considers the emblems under the seals as exhibiting a general history of the greater changes to take place in the world, and especially in the christian church, until the end; while those under the trumpets are supposed to foretell and recount the history of the same times, but more particularly and minutely, and under different characters. In the details *Woodhouse* differs more or less from the preceding expositors, but considers that all the seals foretell the history of the christian church; the first six extending from the first establishment of christianity, to the final coming of Christ, the seventh seal retracing the same period, also containing all the prophecies remaining, and supplying many events reserved for particular notice.

The silence, ch. 8. 1. *Woodhouse* considers preparatory to a change in the mode of exhibition, and in the series of the events, and that the effects of the fire cast upon the earth are the commotions resulting from the reception of the christian religion. The trumpets he considers as designating attacks of heretics, and antichristian corrupters, on the pure christian church. 1. The storm of persecution in Judea. 2. The persecution of the gentile christians arising from the pagan religion, designated by a burning moun-

3. The corruption of the waters of the sea by heretics and false teachers. 4. The frequent failure in part, of that glorious light, which beamed from the christian revelation. 5. The rise of the great apostasy, the first general and total apostasy. 6. The mohammedan or whatever tribe or origin, invading the christian worship and

7. The appearance of the seventh angel, ch. 10, *Woodhouse*

considers to be a created angel, and the hook in his hand to be a portion of the larger sealed one, and possibly the same in part with the prophecies of Daniel, which were sealed in his time, for a distant period. The temple in ch. 11, represents the christian church, the inner court the few who worshipped in spirit and in truth, the outer court the christians by name and profession only, who shall tread and worship in the courts of the Lord's temple, for 1260 years, answering to the same period designated by Daniel. In the prophecy respecting the two witnesses, we are not to expect any literal accomplishment, but are to look for a hidden and allegorical meaning. He considers them as a successive train of professors and preachers of pure biblical religion, raised up in many parts of the great christian republic, and at various periods, especially through the different stages of the reformation, but that it is to future time only we can look with safety, for the exposition of a prophecy, whose complete history may yet remain to be unfolded. Such a dark interval preceded the reformation, when again set on foot by the preaching of Luther. The rulers of the darkness of this world, had then, to all human appearance, extinguished the light of evangelical truth. But while they were celebrating their triumph, the holy light re-kindled, and it arose as it were from the dead. By Luther, Melancthon, Calvin, Zuinglius, and their followers, the religion of the Bible, the gospel of Christ, was reproduced in the christian world, and perpetuated by the then newly-invented art of printing; and again became the rule of worship and duty, the sure guide to heaven. The reformation may be considered to amount nearly to the fulfilment of the earthquake, ch. 11. 13. Then the great city or community professing itself christian, renounced obedience to the roman pontiff, though a considerable number who were christians in name and profession, fell from the life which is in Christ. The fulfilment of the seventh trumpet *Woodhouse*, with *Vitruvius*, refers to times yet to come in this present world, when the reign of Christ's pure religion shall be extended far beyond any limits which have yet contained it.

As to the woman and the dragon ch. 12. almost all agree that the former represents the church of Christ. Methodius, as early as A.D. 290, applies it thus: it is identified with Satan. His seven heads express vast worldly power and exaltation. With his tail he draws up part of the stars to the earth, angels or men, or rather both. The new-born child, the hope of the world, belongs to the Messiah, not one

at the throne of God, but taking his seat there. The church is preserved miraculously in obscure retreats, escaping the calamities raised by the great adversary against the church of Christ, intimated by the torrent or flood of water.

The beast, ch. 13, rising out of the sea, or the gentile world, represents an oppressive and persecuting power, renewed and continued for ages, during 1260 years, even after the roman empire had been divided into its ten horns or kingdoms. This beast succeeds to the dragon, and promotes the interests of his master, the wor-ship of him in this world. The deadly wound seems to have been received at the accession of the christian emperors, but the christian leaders eagerly seizing the power and riches of the world, and ensnared by the temptation, restored the beast to life again, under a more dangerous power, when a corrupt system of civil tyranny began to be supported by ecclesiastical authority. The seven heads represent seven secular powers reigning in succession to each other. This *secular* beast seems to have been in action from the earliest times of government, even from the time of Nimrod, Gen. 10. 8, 9, but its enormities, as displayed in the prophecies of Daniel and the Apocalypse, are to be dated only from his junction and co-operation with the *ecclesiastical* beast. These bear the principal parts in the warfare of Satan against the church. *Woodhouse* considers that four periods of 1260 years are indicated in the Apocalypse, but their commencements appear to be involved in obscurity which events only can clear; these periods do not appear to synchronise in all their parts.

The beast from the land, or false prophet, appears to denote a wide display of anti-christian enormities in the whole christian world, both west and east, verified in the papacy of the one part, and the mohammedanism of the other. And taking advantage of the turbid and degenerate state of the church, Mohammed and the popes established their respective apostacies; and thus from the combination of the dragon or ancient serpent, with the first and second wild beasts, or secular and hierarchical powers, arose that spiritual and temporal despotism, which, under the emblem of "the image," has inflicted so much calamity on the christian world. With respect to the number of the beast, *Woodhouse* confesses his inability to solve the enigma. The 144,000 of ch. 14. are true, persecuted, and suffering christians, corrupted by false doctrines, and false prophecies. The first proclaiming anti-christianity, the progress of the reformation, relates to its further progress, and the second, prophetically anticipates the fall of

Babylon. The third warns of the Divine wrath. Both the harvest and the vintage *Woodhouse* considers as symbolical of the final vengeance of the Almighty upon his enemies, evidently not yet fulfilled.

With respect to the vials, the number seven denotes a complete visitation. The objects of the Divine vengeance are the enemies of the Lamb, and the persecutors of his followers; the article in the original, shows that "the men" designated as antichristian, are intended; and the pouring out the vials could not begin, till after the deadly wound was healed. *Woodhouse* objects to the particular interpretations assigned to these symbols, and appears inclined to consider the first four as indicating that every part of the bestial dominions is to suffer, instead of confining our views to exclusive portions of history arbitrarily assumed. The last three he considers as still enveloped in futurity. His view of the seal of the beast has been noticed in the comment, and the sixth vial he does not consider applies to the Jews, but leads us to expect that all hinderances will be removed, and the passage from eastern mohammedanism and idolatry, to pure and saving faith effected. The three evil spirits at work upon the nations, may probably have some reference to the french revolution, though he thought that had passed by, leaving us to look for some more complete fulfilment of the prophecy. The seventh vial is poured out upon the air, which pervades all parts of the world, and is the region of which Satan is denominated the prince, implying that the antichristian powers are attacked in their strongest hold, and in every part. The inflictions are symbolical, and are to be considered in a spiritual sense.

The great harlot, the mystical Babylon, is referred to the apostate christian Rome. Her beast, like that of ch. 13, is the secular power, which has at all times persecuted the saints, but the first had dominion both over the east and the west, the second is confined to the west, to the remains of the roman empire; both the woman and her beast are entirely roman. The ten horns are expressly stated to be ten kings or kingdoms, and seven kings or kingdoms in succession can only be found in Rome, and we shall look in vain to other quarters of the globe for the completion of this prophecy. The destruction of the mystical Babylon we have events for which we search in the records of past ages, and a proper application of the symbols to future such as may be pictured only; imaginations, is not to be indulged, never yet has suffered the utter here described. From the time Rome was acknowledged to be

Babylon, and the discovery was made early in the twelfth century, great must have been the encouragement derived to the reformers from this chapter of the Apocalypse.

The white horse, ch. 19, *Woodhouse* identifies with the same emblem under the first seal, whose rider went forth conquering and to conquer, and has been pursuing his destined course, though not always equally in sight. The christian church again pure, in white garments, sees her Messiah in person, leading her forces in the grand and decisive combat, wherein the antichristian powers shall be utterly destroyed. After the appearance of the Messiah and his armies, the worldly powers, mustered by the spirits of demons, ch. 16. 14, come in view. The conflict is finished in an instant. The kingdom of the beast and the false prophet, the civil and ecclesiastical power, administered so long, and with so many abuses, comes to its end; the kingdom of the Messiah, and of righteousness, is established. This is that happy period, the theme of many prophecies, which being still future, it is presumptuous to attempt to explain particularly, yet thus far may be safely concluded, that as we have already seen the reign of the beast and false prophet, the mystery of iniquity, so exactly foretold, and the prophecy so wonderfully fulfilled—tyranny, irreligion, hypocrisy, and immorality, triumphant and oppressive, by means of pretended commissions from heaven; so this usurpation will be utterly destroyed; and pure religion, and peace and happiness will succeed. This is symbolically displayed. The influence of Satan upon earth is wonderfully diminished. The author of all iniquity is confined for a time, after which he is permitted to come forth again for a season, and to deceive the nations. But the beasts rise up no more. This blissful season, during which Satan continues bound, is called a thousand years. The prophecies delivered by Daniel, and alluded to by St. Paul, 1 Cor. 6. 2, 3, and by our Lord in his promise, Matt. 19, 28; Luke 22. 30; dark in themselves, till the event and completion shall illustrate them, are here repeated. The faithful sons and champions of the church, are described as living and reigning with Christ, during the thousand years.

After the grand period of the millennium, the period of apostacy shall take place, and from the former, as the same are not employed. But the enemies of christianity, then, miraculous, and complete. The reign of Christ being at length triumphant, its enemies, and Satan eternal, nothing remains to describe the final judgment, the process of which is shortly and sublimely related in

figurative language, similar to what is used in other passages foretelling this great event. Then, under images accordant with many other texts of scripture, is represented the assembly of the saints purified from sin, the glorious church without spot, all things are made new. In conclusion, the apostle is favoured with a near view of the christian church, upon a new earth, perfect and triumphant, after the renovation of all things, described in terms which represent it as glorious beyond human imagination.

The view of the Apocalypse adopted by *Croly* differs from other expositors. He considers this book is a collection of Divine visions, seen probably at different times, and he divides the contents into six portions. (1.) The vision of the asiatic persecution, ch. 1—3. (2.) The vision of the seals, or general view of providence, in the government of the church, and the world, ch. 4—7. (3.) The vision of the trumpets, ch. 8—11. (4.) The vision of the vials, ch. 15, 16, with the connected chapters, 17, 18, 19. (5.) The vision of the church, distinguished into three eras, pagan persecution, papal persecution, and the catastrophe of the persecutors, ch. 12—14. (6.) The vision of the triumph of christianity, ch. 20—22. But if *Mede's* interpretation is justly considered objectionable from the too great prominence it gives to secular events of the roman empire, the view taken by *Croly* will probably be disapproved, from its being as restricted in its application, although to a roman empire, more spiritual in its nature. Nearly the whole of the seals, trumpets, and vials are referred by him exclusively to the papacy and the french revolution.

It would not be difficult to add twenty other schemes of interpretation to those already given, and for the most part differing widely from them, but the reader probably is already more than satisfied. We may however remark, in reference to these, that although each is, and must be incorrect in some respects, yet they may be considered to include among them the soundest and best interpretations which have been given, and those which it may be believed, will be found to approximate nearly to the truth in many respects, when it shall please the Lord. High to lift the remainder of the book, yet covers a large portion of the

Keith cautions both expositors and readers. "It is not for mortals to add to, or to take from the prophecy, or the book of the revelation of Christ. The blessing promised to who read and understand, ought less to be forfeited. But too much caution cannot be exercised against,

to be wise above what is written, or placing any vain imagination in the stead of a prophetic declaration, or thinking that we see a sign where God has shown none. And when the event only is revealed, it is not for men to dogmatize about the mode or means of its accomplishment; for God's ways are not as our ways, nor his thoughts as our thoughts, and his purposes may be wrought out in a manner that we wot not." Another caution, given by *Durham*, is important—to avoid those expositors, who enervate the scope and ground of the book, which is to show things belonging to the church and Christ's servants peculiarly, and especially to show the trials of the church from inward enemies, and the spiritual hurt and defection that is to come on the church. It is useful to Christ's servants as a prophecy, and useful to the end, and they are blessed that shall make use of it as such, at the end, as well as now. Caution is the more necessary, as this great object is too often lost sight of, even by evangelical expositors, in their eagerness to interpret and apply the symbolical representations of this book.

One valuable feature, common to *Mede*, *Faber*, *Cunninghame*, and *Woodhouse*, is, that they seldom attempt to make any individual application of the symbols; and it may be remarked that wherever they have so done, their interpretations will be found the least satisfactory, and the most easily set aside by their opponents. The commentaries of *Lutring* and *Gill* will be found to contain much that is valuable, and notice most of the views given by the leading commentators of recent date, expressed in terms free from a dictatorial spirit, and void of censure towards those who may differ. The readers of these, and some other older commentators, will be surprised to find how few ideas, really novel and original, have of late been brought forward, even by the wilder theorists, excepting in their application to events of very recent date, in which many have been so much inclined to indulge, but here the expositor always treads upon dangerous ground. Events of our own times present themselves in such strong points of view, and appear in such glowing colours, that it is difficult to avoid the temptation to apply them to some of the symbolic representations in this mysterious book. But the out of prophecy cannot be too strongly urged to forbear from such a course. It is such a temptation, that *Bright* applied the slaying of the witness Interim in Germany, and connects ch. 14 described "a harvest many, by Frederic of Saxony, the protestant princes, and the free after that a vintage in England, by

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Thomas Cromwell, and Thomas Cranmer." Also, that "the vials are poured out, the first by our most gracious queen Elizabeth, and other protestant princes; the second by Martin Chemnicus upon the council of Trent; the third by William Cecil upon the jesuits." In like manner we find *Freere* in 1815, stating that "the effect of the fifth vial has been to throw Buonaparte again into obscurity," and applying Dan. 11. 41—44, as that, "these verses describe a second expedition of Buonaparte into Egypt, in which it appears that he will not as formerly proceed by sea, but by land," &c. also stating for a matter of certainty, that "Buonaparte, on hearing the intelligence from the north, and the east, will return into the holy land, and will then plant his tabernacles in the valley of Megiddo, between the glorious holy mountains; there the treading of the wine press will take place, and there he and all his army will perish under the manifest vengeance of God." And in reference to the expiration of the times, we find the same writer in 1815, saying, "The period of the destruction of the fourth beast, and its little horn, being the last 30 of 1290 years, will terminate between March 1822 and March 1823, and there can be but little doubt that the prophetic hour will strike with the same precision, at the expiration of this period, by the overthrow of the infidel power, the final destruction of the papacy, and the restoration of the jews, as it did in the year 1792, by the overthrow of the french monarchy, and the commencement of the downfall of the papacy." Surely such statements must convince us of the truth and value of *Faber's* words; "That we should, antecedently to the accomplishment of such prophecies, pretend to settle and determine minute particulars, was not, I apprehend, the intention of the revealing Spirit."

The remark of *Fleming* on this subject is worthy of notice—"There is danger of hope carrying too far, and also fear. This observation will generally be found to be true; that those, over whose reason fancy and imagination has the ascendancy, whether it be an airy or sprightly, or a dull and melancholy one, have limited great events (of a glorious or a suffering nature) to their own time, and most commonly to a few years." Let not however the more humble and dogmatical inquirer be shaken in, when he finds these subjects involved in obscurity, and such different interpretations given of the same symbolic representations. *Hurd* meets this difficulty, "prophecy be to attest the truth of it, then may we be sure that such a prediction will not carry with it the degree of evidence. For christianity,

a state of discipline and probation, calculated to improve our moral nature, by giving scope and exercise to our moral faculties. So that though the evidence for it be *real* evidence, and *sufficient* evidence, yet we cannot expect it to be of that sort which should compel our assent. Something must be left to quicken our attention, and excite our industry. Had the purpose of prophecy been merely to show that a predicted event was foreseen, then the end had been best answered by throwing all possible evidence into the completion. But its concern being to show this, to such only as should be disposed to admit a reasonable degree of evidence, it was not necessary, or rather it was plainly not fit, that the completion should be seen in that strong and irresistible light. For all the reasons now given, and doubtless for many more, it was to be expected, that prophecy would not be one cloudless emanation of light and glory. If it be clear enough to serve the ends for which it was designed, if through all its obscurities we are able to trace the hand and intention of its Divine Author, what more would we have? How inappropriately indeed do we ask more of that Great Being, who, for the sake of the *natural* world, clothes the heavens with blackness, Is. 50. 3, and in equal mercy to the *moral* world, veils his nature and providence in thick clouds, and makes darkness his pavilion, Ps. 18. 11."

The same writer, *Hurd*, in his remarks upon the words of the angel, Rev. 19. 10, points out the great object of all prophecy, which should be deeply impressed upon the mind of every student, or expositor of prophecy, but which, we have already said, is often forgotten, especially among the controversies to which discordant schemes have given rise. "The spirit of prophecy is but in other words, the testimony of Jesus; it has no other rise or end, but to do honour to him. The prophet, whether he be angel or man, is only the minister of God to bear witness to his Son; and his commission, (and surely that of the interpreter also,) is ultimately directed to the one purpose of manifesting the glories of his kingdom. In discharging this prophetic office, which thou admirest so much, I am then, but the witness of Jesus, to be considered by thee in no less light than that of thy fellow-servant."

As on to state, it is evident from the text, that the text was intended as a special instruction to the apostles, that this was "to convey the idea of prophecy itself, as being subservient to Christ, and whether by use or distinction, under various forms, and in all the diversities of illustration, than to bear testimony to the terms are absolute and in-

definite, the spirit of prophecy, whence we cannot but conclude that prophecy in general, is here intended.

To use the words of *Bossuet*, which have been repeatedly quoted by expositors of this book.—“In the *Gospel* of John we read the life of Christ on earth; and we there see a man conversing with men, humble, weak, and suffering; we behold a sacrifice ready to be offered, by one appointed to sorrows and death; but in the *book of Revelation* by John, we have the gospel of Christ now raised from the dead. He speaks and acts as having conquered the grave, and triumphed over death and hell, and so having entered into the place of his glory, angels, principalities, and powers being made subject unto him; and exercising the supreme universal power, which he has received from the Father, over all things in heaven and earth, as the Saviour, for the protection of his church, and to ensure the happiness of his faithful servants in the end.” And again, to apply the words of *Bale*, “No where is more clearly specified, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, to be one everlasting God, and Jesus Christ to be the eternal Son of that living Father, which are the first and chief grounds of our christian faith, than here. No where is the durable kingdom and priesthood of Christ, more plenteously spread forth, more plainly proved, and more largely uttered, than in this holy oracle. No where is the doctrine of salvation more purely taught, faith more thoroughly commended, nor yet righteousness more highly rewarded than here. No where are heresies more earnestly condemned, blasphemous vices more vehemently rebuked, nor yet their just plagues more fiercely threatened, than in this compendious work.” “Then READ what is here revealed; MEDITATE on what thou rearest; PRACTISE what thou knowest upon meditation; and PRAY that by all these, and beyond all these, the Lord Christ may enable thee to know.”—*F. Roberts*.

ON THE LIFE AND CHARACTER OF ST. PAUL.

The history of the apostle Paul is narrated in the Acts of the apostles, which book is chiefly occupied in recording many of his discourses and travels. Several circumstances also are to be learned from the epistles. We see in him a most careful and deliberate choice of the manner in which he pleased sometimes to select his words, and admired endowments, whom he gladly have classed among its aids; to render them of extensive service to the interests of christianity. St. Paul was a blasphemer and a persecutor of the cause of Christ, but he had arrived at a greater degree

of perfection, or to have been more useful than he was, after he entered on his service. We thank God for the amazing effects of his preaching, but especially for his inspired compositions, which form a considerable part of the New Testament. His name originally was Saul, he was an undoubted descendant of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin, without any mixture of gentile parentage, although he was a native of Tarsus, the chief city of Cilicia, a province of Asia Minor. His father was a citizen of Rome, probably having obtained that great honour and privilege by military services. Some have considered that the cloak and parchments mentioned 2 Tim. 4. 13, were the roman toga, and the certificates of citizenship. This father was a pharisee, and had brought him up strictly, according to the principles of that sect; but his sister's son, and other relations, were christians before his conversion. Tarsus was highly celebrated for the polite learning of that period, and for rhetoric, and Saul evidently had been well instructed therein. The tarsiic eloquence was characterized by sudden and unpremeditated harangues, and the apostle seems to have been led thereby into the use of the abrupt transitions which are frequent in his epistles. In his youth he appears to have removed to Jerusalem, and there to have studied the Jewish law and traditions, under Gamaliel, one of the most celebrated teachers of that day. He possessed great natural abilities, strong passions, and firm resolution; his moral conduct was blameless, and he strictly followed the dictates of his conscience. The last circumstance of his early life is, that agreeably to the custom of the Jews, by which every one, even the most learned, or highest in rank, learned some trade, he had been taught that of tent-making, which he afterwards followed for his maintenance.

It would be difficult to devise a process of instruction, and a course of early life, less likely, according to human views, to prepare the way for a meek, humble, and self-denying reception of the doctrines of the cross. Pride of birth, pride of intellect, pride of knowledge, and pride of religious profession, all were united to oppose the entrance of the humble and self-denying principles of the followers of the Lamb of God. Accordingly we find Saul a bitter enemy, and a furious opposer of christianity, rejecting the professors of that faith, also persecuting and assisting at the martyrdom of the saints, and as it is emphatically expressed, “the voice of the church.” He was content with the opportunity of persecution, which Jerusalem afforded him, and he proceeded to Damascus with the chief priests, and no

doubt, with credentials to the governor, which would have enabled him to tear from their families any jews professing christianity and to bring them as prisoners to Jerusalem. Just before his arrival at Damascus, his miraculous conversion took place, as recorded Acts 9. The conversion of such a man, at such a time, and by such means, furnishes a most complete proof of the Divine origin of christianity. That Saul, who possessed such distinguished talents and acquirements, from being a zealous persecutor of the disciples of Christ, all at once became a disciple himself, is a fact which cannot be controverted without overturning the credit of all history. The existence of Julius Cesar, is less clearly substantiated. It follows then that Saul must either have been converted in the miraculous manner in which he himself declares he was converted, a fact sufficient, if there were no other, to prove that the christian revelation is from God, or we must conclude him to be an impostor, an enthusiast, or a dupe to the fraud of others.

T. H. Horne, fully examines each of these suppositions, and shows them to be impossible. That the apostle was not an impostor, at once appears by the relative situation of the parties at that period. What motive that ever actuated an impostor, existed in his case? Did he seek for wealth, honour, or sensual gratification? All these he cheerfully renounced. The course he followed compelled him to give up all he had, or hoped for; and to become, in the views of his community, a degraded, persecuted outcast, relinquishing his clear prospects of worldly power and reputation, and continually exposing his life in the cause he was miraculously constrained to adopt. Let any one read the simple statement of his services and sufferings, 2 Cor. 11. 23, 30, or the narratives in the Acts, and say whether such a course of life could present any inducement for imposture! Nor was he involved by degrees, or by any concurring circumstances, in his new profession. The change was decided and instantaneous, *against* every call of interest, or plea of prejudice; nor was it a course leading to laxity of principle or practice. His writings show the utmost abhorrence of all idleness, licentiousness, or loose behaviour.

It is equally clear that the apostle was an enthusiast; though zealous, both as a Jew and as a christian, it is evident that he was completely master of his temper, and means subject to violent impulse. He was no melancholy courtier of fortune. His zeal was the ardour of one who felt the truth, and felt the unspeakable importance of his commission, while it was evidently from the hand of

Nor was the apostle an ignorant man: any one who can appreciate his writings, must be satisfied that he was master, not only of jewish learning, but of grecian philosophy and literature. That he was not credulous, or easily persuaded to change his views, is proved by his early and persevering opposition to christianity. He was free from vanity, for evidently he sought neither personal honours nor power for himself. No one can use stronger terms of self-abhorrence and humiliation than this apostle, and it is not that mock humility which courts applause. As to the circumstances attendant on his conversion, let it be remembered, that they did not hurry him forward in the course wherein he was engaged, but were the means of carrying him into one directly opposed to all that he had hitherto esteemed, and aimed to accomplish, and had a manifest and extraordinary effect upon his companions, though he alone appears to have been changed in heart and life.

That he should be the dupe of others is still more impossible. Could the despised, degraded, persecuted, disciples of Christ effect a total change in a character such as we have seen Saul to be? It was *morally* impossible for them even to conceive such an idea, and it was *physically* impossible for them to use any means, or to combine the circumstances attendant on the change. No one open to the calm consideration of the subject, could ever for one moment adopt such an idea.

The disciples of Christ were hardly persuaded to credit his integrity, and the reality of his conversion, nor had he any previous intercourse with them. Still less could he have been imposed on by his former associates, who sought his life for deserting their cause. The only possible conclusion is that which is matter of historical record, that he was constituted an apostle by the Lord Jesus, and therefore the doctrine he preached is a revelation from heaven.

Shortly after Saul's conversion, he went into Arabia, Gal. 1. 17, and it appears, that during his residence in that country, he was fully instructed in the doctrines of the gospel, by a special revelation, and by the study of the Old Testament scriptures. After three years he returned to Damascus,

where he boldly preached to the jews, who sought to kill him as an apostate, but he went to Jerusalem, where the jews first hesitated to receive him as an apostle. He remained there only fifteen days, when the jews again conspiring his life, he was induced to retire to Tarsus, where also he had important disciples, and four years afterwards he came to Antioch, where he taught with success. Two years afterwards, we

find him again going to Jerusalem, with a collection for the relief of the poor christians in Judea, during a time of famine. He is supposed then to have had a trance or vision, Acts 22. 17, and returned to Antioch, from whence he departed in the following year, upon a mission to the gentiles, to which he was separated with Barnabas, by the solemn and express appointment of God the Holy Spirit. He was the first of the apostles, who, by Christ's command, declared that faith, without circumcision, was necessary to the salvation of the gentiles. These particulars fully show that the apostle Paul did not gain his knowledge of christianity by conference with the other apostles, or instruction from them. He expressly states the contrary in the epistle to the Galatians, and elsewhere. Thus he is to be regarded as taught by immediate inspiration, as well as the other apostles, and is, with them, a competent and independent witness to the gospel system. That the change wrought within him should endure, notwithstanding this cold reception, is a proof that the work was Divine in its origin, and decisive in its effects.

The Divine wisdom also appears very wonderfully displayed in selecting a person of St. Paul's former character, who must, upon so many accounts, be allowed to be a desirable, and most unexceptionable witness for the gospel. And, in a most signal manner, the rich mercy of our God, and the sufficiency of Divine grace in Jesus Christ, are here exhibited. Also in every line of his history it is manifest, that he ever exhibited an unshaken and affectionate attachment to his Lord, an extensive and generous benevolence to men, and an ardent desire to save their souls, whatever dangers he himself might sustain. The warmest professions seemed too weak to express the fervour of his heart. What words are those! The love of Christ constraineth us, 2 Cor. 5. 14. I will very gladly spend, and be spent for you, though the more abundantly I love you the less I be loved, 2 Cor. 12. 15. Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy and rejoice with you all, Phil. 2. 17. Yet even a distant resemblance and imitation of the pattern exhibited by the apostle, would now, by most, be considered as the mark of mad enthusiasm! But the fear of approach ought not to deter, it is our badge in which we walk.

At the commencement of his mission when in Cyprus, his name has been changed from Saul to Paul, Acts 13. 9. It is thought that this was made by Saul himself, in honour of the consul, Sergius Paulus, who was his first convert from among the

gentiles. It also assimilated his name to the latin language; and it was the custom among the romans to assume the name of a benefactor whom they esteemed; thus Josephus took the name of Flavius, in compliment to Vespasian.

It is not requisite here to follow the apostle through the various journeys which are recorded in the Acts. We see him in the prosecution of his purpose, travelling from country to country, enduring every species of hardship, encountering every extremity of danger, assailed by the populace, punished by the magistrates, scourged, beaten, stoned, left for dead; expecting wherever he came, a renewal of the same treatment, and the same dangers; yet, when driven from one city, preaching in the next; spending his whole time in the employment, sacrificing to it his pleasures, his ease, his safety; persisting in this course to old age, through more than thirty years; unaltered by the experience of perverseness, ingratitude, prejudice, desertion; unsubdued by anxiety, want, labour, or persecutions; unwearied by long confinement, undismayed at the prospect of death.

The inspired narrative leaves Paul a prisoner at Rome, but it is thought that he was released, A.D. 63, after a confinement of two years, probably from the jews not daring to prosecute him before the emperor. Nor are these years to be reckoned among the least useful of his life. St. Paul's labours at Rome appear to have been attended with much success, and several of the epistles were among the fruits of his confinement. From thence, he appears at that period to have felt more than ever the blessedness of his own principles, and to have enjoyed a peculiar elevation of soul. We have no authentic record of the subsequent travels and labours of the apostle. Some have thought that he visited Spain, and even Britain, but the view generally taken is, that on his release, he sailed from Italy to Judea, leaving Titus in Crete, Tit. 1. 5, and visited the churches in Palestine, Syria, and Asia Minor, in company with Timothy, whom he left at Ephesus. He then proceeded to Macedonia and Greece, and passed the winter of A.D. 64 at Nicopolis, a city of Epirus. Thence he went to Crete, and after another visit to Greece, arrived at Rome early in A.D. 65, where he was

after imprisoned for preaching the gospel. Macknight considers it probable that he was more than a year in confinement, during which period many of his converts forsook him and fled, but some remained at Rome attended to him privately, Acts 28. 12, [21]. According to the tradition of the primitive churches, St. Paul, a roman citizen, was beheaded on

June 29, A.D. 66, at Aquæ Salvæ, three miles from Rome, and buried in the Via Ostensis, two miles from the city.

As a preacher, St. Paul was most indefatigable, but he is still more to be revered in the christian church, for the fourteen epistles written by him under the influences and direction of the Holy Spirit, in which the doctrines and practice of the faith as it is in Christ Jesus, are plainly and fully set forth. All is referred to the only Saviour, as the centre and ruling principle, and on this solid foundation is built a beautiful superstructure, which displays the man of God thoroughly furnished to all good works. Further remarks on these epistles will be found in the preface to the present volume. St. Paul is ranked by competent judges, among the first orators and writers of Greece, his scriptural knowledge is not less apparent, and far more important. He had profited in the Jewish religion, above his fellows, whether pharisees or christians. Enough remains of his productions, both as a writer and an orator, fully to prove his claim to these characters, and to show that any insinuation or assertion to the contrary, whether of ancient or of modern date, is the aspersions of enemies to the truth, and to be treated as the effluvia of malignity. But St. Paul is rather to be viewed as the great apostle of the gentiles, the preacher of the only way of salvation, and let it ever be remembered that it is this great apostle, who has most fully explained the doctrine of justification. He has shown that it consists in our being delivered from death, and in our obtaining eternal life, through the obedience of Christ: and that no sinner can obtain this justification meritiously, through the works of the law. And though faith is the condition thereof, justification is still the free gift of God, through Jesus Christ; because no works which men can perform, not even the work of faith itself, has any merit with God to procure pardon for those who have sinned: that this method of justification having been established at the fall, is the way in which mankind, from the beginning to the end of time, are justified; and that as such, it is attested both by the law and the prophets. So that the gospel is not the revelation of a new method of justification, but a more full publication of the method of justification, mercifully established by God for all mankind from the very beginning. The epistles of St. Paul must be regarded as the great repository in which the whole of the gospel is lodged, and from which the knowledge can be drawn with the greatest accuracy.

Collected from T. H. Horne, Paley, and Mucknight.

THE Gnostics.

Some account of these early heretics appears needful. The following is principally from *Mosheim, Woodhouse, and Walsh.*

In the early times of the church, many fanatical and wicked notions sprung up, but they were checked by the efforts of the apostles, and their fellow labourers of a like spirit. Yet the increase of men of such characters was foretold by St. Paul and St. Peter, writing under the influences of the Holy Spirit. Soon afterwards they began to swarm through the christian world. They could not destroy the spiritual life which was in Christ, but they exceedingly corrupted and debased the outward profession of the faith, as had been predicted. See 2 Cor. 11. 13, 14; 1 Tim. 6. 3—5, 20, 21; 2 Tim. 3. 13; 2 Pet. 2. 1; 1 Cor. 11. 19; 2 Thess. 2. 12; 3. 2; Col. 2. 18.

The first considerable body of heretical corrupters was the Gnostics; their seeds and beginnings are to be traced even in the apostolic times, and they were distinctly opposed by the apostle St. John. For Cerinthus, as well as the nicolaitanes, appears to have imbibed the gnostic doctrines. But they did not prevail till the early part of the second century, when Irenæus speaking of two of the gnostic leaders, Basilides and Carpocrates, says their impure followers are not to be numbered, springing up like mushrooms; and Epiphanius says, that they burst out of the earth together at one time, like mushrooms, the lurking places of many scorpions. Hegesippus, who lived in the times of Adrian, says, "that when the sacred company of the apostles was departed, and the generation who heard their divine preaching was gone, then the conspiracy of impious deceit had its open beginning; then to the preaching of the truth did they dare to oppose their knowledge falsely so called." The original documents belonging to those times mostly perished in the Dioclesian persecution, but there is sufficient proof of the general irruption of gnostic principles about A. D. 120, when they burst from their obscurity into open day; and they continued to prevail about a century and a half. These pestilent heretics had nearly disappeared by 270, although their injurious effects on the christians as a body was felt long after.

Gnostics are represented by the carrying mischievous notions to excess. They held the wildest visionary and fantastic philosophy from the eastern schools, concerning the origin of evil, and of the world; these they imputed to the doctrines of christianity, or corrupting those parts of their writings which most clearly set forth their tenets, and many of their practices of the most immoral practices.

ices. Whatever might be the difference among their sects, and whether they imbibed or practised more or less of evil, they agreed in looking upon all as weak and simple, who interpreted scripture in its plain and obvious sense. They affirmed that the true and hidden meaning was possessed by themselves alone. Hence they assumed the title of *gnostics*, formed from a greek word, denoting knowledge, and their interpretations of scripture were usually founded on the opinions of Plato and Pythagoras, though very much distorted and corrupted. These sects entertained unworthy doctrinal views, both of the person and offices of Christ. The greater part denied that Christ had a real body, or that he really suffered pains and sorrows, and died in the cross, asserting that he only appeared to do so. They taught, that he only came to teach mankind how to separate the mind from the body, and render the former worthy of being united to the Father of spirits. The tenets of the egyptian gnostics are stated to be, that there was one Supreme Being, perfect in goodness and wisdom, who produced from his own substance seven beings, or *sons*, of an excellent nature; two of these produced the angels of the highest order, many other generations of angels succeeded, until they amounted, as well as their respective heavens, to the number of 365, all of them under the empire of an omnipotent lord, named Abraxas, or Abrasax, a name which contains in its numeral letters, the mystical number 365. The lowest of these formed a world, and created beings to people it, to whom the Supreme gave reasonable souls, and placed them under the rule of the angels. These angels fell, endeavoured to seduce mankind from the worship of the Supreme Being, and warred with each other. To counteract this, the Deity sent the chief of the *sons*, who joined in a union with the man Jesus, to destroy the empire of these angelic natures, particularly the most turbulent among them, who presided over the jews, and at whose instigation the man Jesus was seized, and put to death, but their efforts against Christ were in vain. Others gave greater prominence to the doctrine of two principles, attributing more or less to the evil principle, then foolish and depraved, as might please, but their doctrine be pursued further into detail notice, that worshipping of angels of their tenets.

The works of several writers have described their tenets, and he had himself been a gnostic, and practices. Very numbers also exist, showing that such was visionary,

impious, and licentious. These evidences are coins and engraved gems, which being formed of lasting materials, uncorrupted by copyists, and not having suffered by the lapse of ages, their devices and inscriptions become witnesses to history, and standards to ascertain its truth. These are very numerous, for the tenets of the gnostics led them to suppose that they could construct talismans or charms, which would control the powers of evil. They therefore engraved various mysterious words and figures, on stones, or pieces of metal, to be amulets. *Hutsh*, in his account of ancient coins, medals, and gems, as illustrating the progress of christianity in the early ages, says, The immense number and variety of these talismans that have been and still are found in many places, very remote from each other, attest the accuracy of the historians who have described these sects with their opinions, and their great encouragement and wide reception in different parts. They are found not only in the east, where travellers procure them without much difficulty, but in the west, they are continually dug up in Spain, Italy, and other countries, proving that no superstition was more widely spread, or so universally adopted. One author has given three hundred fac-similes of these gems, with their different devices and inscriptions. Let any one glance at the emblems upon these gems, and they will readily appreciate the views of those modern sceptics who represent the gnostics as sublime in their views, rational in their opinions, and pure in their conversation, and rightly claiming a pre-eminence in knowledge or science! From such deceptive must turn at once, and adopt the dark picture drawn by those who saw, and who knew the men and their tenets.

These evil tenets are easily to be traced to the superstitions of Egypt and other countries. Some outward semblance of christianity was assumed, under satanic influence, to bring discredit upon the cause of truth and holiness, and while a part of the votaries of the world and the devil thus assumed a new outward profession, the other part willingly confounded the followers of the truth with these hateful and abomi-

nable characters, and then, as now, refusing to discriminate, subjected the pearl of great price and the counterfeits, to one common name.

But the early fathers disavowed these vile opinions and practices, and contrasted the pure doctrine of real christians with their conduct. Athenagoras, who refuted these prejudices, in the particulars, intending to exonerate the christians from the atrocities, but upon examination satisfied that the christians were

calumniated; he became a convert to their doctrines, and wrote in their defence. "If," says he, addressing the emperor, "the crimes objected to us be really true, and if we are capable of committing them, spare us not, nor our wives, nor our children, but root out a race of human beings who live like beasts. But if these charges are unfounded rumours, and empty calumnies, it is your duty to inquire and ascertain what our lives and opinions really are."

The pretext however was too specious to be neglected, and upon these plausible grounds, the persecutions were renewed, though gnosticism had begun to decline. Dioclesian issued exterminating decrees, under which such vast numbers perished, that he erected pillars with inscriptions, to commemorate that "the christian superstition was exterminated," and struck coins bearing an emblematical representation of the supposed success of his efforts; the device of a Jupiter brandishing thunderbolts against a figure prostrate at his feet, intended to designate the Deity of the christians, but personified with the characteristics adopted by the gnostics, and thus identified with their Abrasax, having the same serpent-like feet as the figures engraved on their gems with that name.

The mention of this figure requires us to notice, that one part of the gnostics united with their nominal mention of Christ, that serpent worship which may be traced to the earliest ages of demonology, and which, however disguised, in effect was and is the worship of Satan; and it may still be traced in the various systems of heathenism.

Walsh, referring to the account given by *Minutius Felix*, of the allegations brought against the whole christian church, says, "When the charges against the early christians were so distinctly specified, and the whole body was thus identified with these widely-spread sectarians, it does not appear that the fatal consequences of the doctrines and practices of the latter, and the dreadful injuries they inflicted on the cause of christianity, have been sufficiently insisted upon, nor the additional proof which it affords of the Divine interposition to preserve it. The final triumph of the religion

of the gospel over all the efforts of the heathens to extinguish it is no doubt a strong proof of superhuman support; but the argument for Divine interposition is much strengthened, when we add to the persecutions of its enemies what it had to encounter from the perverseness of its professed friends. Had it been of human fancy or device, from the monstrous corruption and perversions vice and folly introduced, no doubt it would have come to nought."

The work however was of God, and could not be stopped by the vices or efforts of man. There could be no concord between Christ and Belial; the vile mass of pollution could not coalesce with the purity of the christian faith, and it speedily fell off, leaving the truth in unsullied purity, excepting in the ideas of those who were determined to confound what really had no points of union.

Woodhouse enters into many details, to show the similarity between these heretics and the locusts mentioned *Rev. 9. 1—12*. He says, "The important period of 150 years, during which the infant church was darkened and disfigured by the gnostic heresies, and on that account exposed to scandal, and misrepresentation, and additional persecution, seems of magnitude sufficient to require the notice of Divine prophecy. The great and leading facts are fully established, and no doubt can be entertained of their extensive and powerful influence on the progress of christianity. And this is its place in the apocalyptic visions, or it has none."

These principles were connected with the judaizing views so strongly opposed by the apostle Paul. Cerinthus borrowed many gnostic terms and fictions from the jews, and even taught that a part of the mosaic law was to be retained. He also endeavoured to wrest the doctrine of the resurrection to his purpose; promising the resurrection of the mortal body, to enjoy a series of sensual delights, during an earthly reign of Christ, which was to last a thousand years. He taught that Christ would one day return upon earth, and renewing his former union with the man Jesus, reign with his people in the land of Palestine, a thousand years. See *Mosheim*.

THE SYMBOLICAL

THE NATURAL

The natural world denotes
The sun—The moon—The stars
The earth
Mountains—Islands
Trees—Grass
Waters
Rivers and fountains—Floods ...

PROPHECY.

UNDERTAKING
Authority in a family or a state
The domain of the empire
Smaller kingdoms
Men of humble condition
The people
Communities, Bodies of men in motion ..

Darkening of the sun, the turning of the moon	Great political revolutions.
into blood, the falling of the stars, &c.	Partial calamities.
Comets of the heavenly bodies.	Downfall of a sovereign prince.
Darkening of a star	A grievous tyranny.
Darkening of men with the sun	A revolution.
Earthquake	Subversion of kingdoms.
Removal of islands and mountains	Sanguinary revolutions.
Sea turned into blood	Great wars.
Turning rivers and fountains into blood	Making bitter with some natural or moral evil.
Feeding with wormwood	Subversion of a kingdom.
Turning up a river	

THE NATURAL WORLD ECCLESIASTICALLY CONSIDERED.

The natural world denotes	The complete body politic of the church.
Sun	Christ the supreme Ruler.
Moon	Ordinances of Christ in his church.
Stars	Pastors.
Area of the earth	The platform or territory of the church.
The passing away of heaven and earth into nothing	A cessation of a church, or a transition of the church from one state to a better.
The falling down of the firmament	Ecclesiastical censures.
Changes among the celestial bodies	Ecclesiastical changes.
Earthquake	Ecclesiastical convulsion.
Falling of a star from heaven	The apostasy of an eminent pastor.
Descent of soft dew and rain from heaven	The sanctifying grace of the Holy Spirit.

A WILD BEAST TEMPORALLY CONSIDERED.

A wild beast denotes	A great persecuting empire.
Head or heads	Forms of government.
Horns and wings—Tusks	Kingdom—Dynasties.
Teeth and claws—Tail	The soldiery—Antichristian superstition.
Beating of the wings	Diminution of strength.
The rise or breaking of a horn	The rise or dissolution of a state.
The falling of a head, and its healing	Abolition of a form of government, and its restoration.
The life of a beast—The death of a beast	Political existence—Political dissolution.

A WILD BEAST ECCLESIASTICALLY CONSIDERED.

A wild beast denotes	A persecuting church having temporal authority.
Horn of such a beast	Temporal or spiritual power.
Two-horned beast	A church having temporal and spiritual power.
Head	The governing polity.
Body	The constituents of such an empire.

A CITY, &c.

The great city Babylon denotes	The roman empire.
The streets	Kingdoms of the modern roman empire.
Streets	The tyrannical domination of the reigning head.
The throne	The great men of the earth.
The merchants and shopmasters	Spiritual traffic in relics, masses, absolutions, &c.
The articles of trade, such as gold, silver, &c.	The church of Christ.
The holy city denotes	The spiritual church.
The temple with its inner courts	The prayers and praises of God's people.
The daily sacrifice	Christians in name, but gentiles in practice.
The outer court	Introducing pagan heresies and apostasies.
Feet under foot	Setting up the apostasy of desolation or of pagan abominations.
Refining the sanctuary, and abolition of the daily sacrifice	A church.
An olive tree, or a candlestick	The graces of the Holy Spirit.
Oil, lamps	The merits of Christ giving efficacy to prayer.
Incense	The holy scriptures.
The ark of the Testament	

A WOMAN.

A woman denotes	A community, or body politic.
Chaste woman	True church, or Lamb's wife.
Harlot or adulteress	Papal or idolatrous church.
Flesh of such a harlot	Temporal possessions.
Intoxicating cup	Living arts.
Feeding a wild beast	Prevalence over the temporal empire.
A woman drunken with the blood of the saints	Oppression of the church.
A woman denotes	Church.
Fruit bearing good fruit	Church.
Vine bearing sour grapes	Execution of God's wrath upon apostates, &c.
Pressing of the wine-press	Church hedged in from the world.
Vineyard enclosed	

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A vineyard with broken enclosures	A degenerate church.
A wilderness	Spiritual barrenness, or a state of affliction.
The wilderness and solitary place made glad	Conversion and prosperity.
Corn denotes	The seed of the gospel kingdom.
A field of corn	The church
A harvest	Mercy or wrath, according to circumstances.
The harvest of the earth being ripe	The time of judgment or mercy being come.
A sickle	Judgments.

VARIOUS SYMBOLS.

Thunder and lightning denote	Wars and hostile invasions.
Locusts and caterpillars	Destroying armies.
Tempestuous winds	Wars and invasions.
White and clean robes	Righteousness and prosperity.
Sackcloth	Humiliation and persecution.
Nakedness	Dishonour.
A yoke—A famine	Spiritual bondage—Spiritual sterility.
A day	A year.
A year	360 years
A week—A month	Seven years.—Thirty years.
Angels	Divine agents, celestial or terrestrial.
The two witnesses	The true church.
Dragon	The devil.
Red dragon, having seven heads and ten horns	The devil, influencing the councils of the empire.
A Time—Times	360 years—The double of a time.
Time, times, and half a time	1260 years.
Rainbow	God's faithfulness and mercy.
Parturition	The birth of a community, civil or ecclesiastical.
Life	Moral or political existence.
Sore	Calamity, natural or moral.
Sickness	A low state of moral or political health.
Death	Extinction of moral or political existence.
Slaying	The infliction of moral or political death.
Revival	The recovery of moral or political life, once lost.
Resurrection	The resurrection of a body, moral or political.
The lying unburied for a short time	Its being dead or subdued for a short time.
Ascension to heaven	Power and authority.
To measure the temple of God	To take it under protection.
To seal or set a mark	Separation to his service who seals.
To devour flesh	Plundering of substance.
To eat	To meditate
To seal up a prophecy	Allowing it to remain unintelligible till accomplished.
Third part—Fourth part	Limitation, in opposition to universal.

From Dabuz, Fulcr, T. H. Horne, Hutcheson, and Hymys.

AUTHORS QUOTED IN THIS COMMENTARY.

The paragraphs in this Commentary to which numbers are affixed, are from the authors whose names appear in the following list. Those from Henry and Scott have not any numbers subjoined. In the notes, in smaller type, the names of the authors quoted are usually given at length.

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2 Buddicom.	23. Fuller, A.	44. Lowth.	64. Watson, R.	82. Guyse.
3. Baxter.	24. Fuller, T.	45. Lightfoot.	65. Wardlaw.	83. Gillies.
4. Boothby.	25. Fry.	46. Lawson.	66. Witherspoon.	84. Gieswell.
5 Bickersteth.	26. Graves.	47. Morison.	67. Wall.	85. Hawkins.
6 Bridges.	27. Gill.	48. M'Ewen.	68. Yonge.	86. Keith.
7. Burder.	28. Guinall.	49. Mather.	69. Henry.	87. Lothian.
8. Bunt, H.	29. Gordon.	50. Macculloch.	70. Scott.	88. Leighton.
9. Burroughs.	30. Greenfield.	51. Macculloch.	71. Adam.	89. Lowman.
10. Brown, J.	31. Hervey.	52. Macculloch.	72. Adams, T.	90. Macknight.
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15. Caryl.	36. Holden.	57. Macculloch.	77. Adams, T.	95. Quessnell.
16. Diodati.	37. Hawker.	58. Macculloch.	78. Adams, T.	96. Slade.
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18. Dickson.	39. Hunter.	60. Macculloch.	80. Adams, T.	98. Taylor.
19. Delany.	40. Howe.	61. Macculloch.	81. Adams, T.	99. Whitby.
20. Durham.	41. Jenour.	62. Macculloch.	82. Adams, T.	100. Valpy.
21. Edwards, J.	42. Jay.	63. Macculloch.	83. Adams, T.	

